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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

22nd plenary meeting
Saturday, 24 September 2016, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Young (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdallah (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin my statement by congratulating the President and his country, the Republic of Fiji, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I am confident that his wisdom and competence will enable him to steer the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion. I would also like to assure him that my delegation stands ready to cooperate with him in achieving our desired goals. Nor should I miss this opportunity to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of the Kingdom of Denmark, for his effectiveness in conducting the work of the Assembly at its seventieth session, which was key to ensuring that agreements were reached on several international issues.

I would also like to put on record our appreciation for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's tireless efforts over the past 10 years to serve the shared interests of the international community and bring the work of the Organization and its organs up to the expectations of Member States.

Since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations has attained a position of esteem in international relations. In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation to the Organization's founding States, especially the permanent members of the Security Council, for their efforts to maintain international peace and security despite the challenges they continue to face. They have made the Organization a safe haven in which States can settle their disputes and differences by peaceful means, based on the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which uphold the principles of mutual respect, good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and peaceful coexistence.

We would be remiss if we failed to point out that the world has seen many successes and positive developments, politically, socially, economically, scientifically and technically, which today have made us closer and more interdependent than ever before. However, we are still dealing with many challenges and tragedies that humankind can never forget, challenges that should motivate us all to work harder in support of international peace and security.

We in the Sultanate of Oman continue to believe that there is a solution for every problem as long as our interests converge, the necessary political will is there and we act in a concerted way. That is because by their nature people are inclined to love peace, understanding and peaceful coexistence, which serve the interests

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of all parties based on the golden rule that we should do unto others as we would do unto ourselves. My country is therefore among the States that have adopted a policy of dialogue, negotiation and conciliation in order to settle disputes by peaceful means, based on the provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter and on the standards and traditions of our human heritage. Thanks to the peaceful diplomatic approach of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said of Oman, we have succeeded in establishing friendly relations and cooperation with countries all over the world that we are keen to maintain and develop in every area for the interests and for the good of the Sultanate and other countries.

We should also take this opportunity to emphasize the centrality of the Palestinian question for stability in the Middle East. If we cannot reach a comprehensive and just solution to the issue, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of establishing normal relations between the States and peoples of the region in a way that can foster mutual trust and coexistence. Despite the efforts of the international community and the various initiatives to help the Palestinians and the Israelis to reach an agreement on a road map that would look after the interest of both parties, all efforts failed to achieve the desired outcome. Therefore, we would like to renew our call to the international community to intensify efforts through a new perspective that would enable the concerned parties to reach a comprehensive and just settlement that would end the long conflict.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the United Nations and to the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General for their efforts to reach peaceful settlements to crises in a number of States in the Middle East, especially the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Yemen and Libya. However, we should note that the situations in those States have suffered serious setbacks, which threaten international peace and security.

We believe in the importance of adhering to the principle of dialogue in order to resolve disputes by peaceful means. Since the onset of the crises in the three aforementioned States, the Sultanate of Oman has sought to reconcile points of view with the parties concerned and to encourage them to reject differences and resume negotiation. The Sultanate has hosted several meetings towards that end, in coordination with the United Nations. In that respect, we cannot fail to pay tribute to the laudable efforts of the State of Kuwait for hosting the Yemen peace negotiations. We laud, in particular, the efforts exerted by His Highness Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to bridge the gap in the views of Yemeni parties. The goal has been to achieve a win-win solution to the conflict through peaceful negotiations.

In closing, we must emphasize the need for the spirit of joint international action, which makes it incumbent upon all of us to rid ourselves of the negative aspects of the past and concentrate on the positive elements of the future. Our goal should be to develop relations, enhance cooperation, deepen interests between States and peoples, and settle differences through dialogue that is based on the principles and provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international legal principles. By doing so, the United Nations will remain the beacon of peace for all States.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to extend to Mr. Thomson, and through him to the friendly country of Fiji, my sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I wish him sustained success in the discharge of the noble tasks with which he has been entrusted. I also wish to express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his outstanding contribution and his efficient and highly professional management of the work of the General Assembly at the seventieth session.

We commend the extraordinary efforts exerted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during his two terms with a view to achieving the goals of the international Organization in establishing the foundations of peace and security in the world. We share the hope he expressed in his statement at the beginning of the general debate (see A/71/PV.8) that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will enter into force by the end of this year. We also endorse his proposal for the establishment of a high-level panel to find practical solutions that will improve decision-making mechanisms at the United Nations. We support the continued pursuit of the great achievements that took place in all domains, notably in the fields of education and health, during the past decade. I seize this opportunity to express to the Secretary-General our thanks and appreciation for all that he has accomplished at the helm of the Organization and to wish him every success in his future endeavours in the service of his own country and the world at large.

The theme of this general debate, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", testifies to our collective will and earnest desire to achieve those Goals. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, my country attaches great importance to the Goals and has already started to implement them, as is documented in international reports. My country will persevere in its commitment, consistent with its ambitious national plans and programmes, fully convinced that the achievement of the Goals promises a bright future for its citizens.

A few days ago, the United Nations held an important demonstration of its relationship with the Kingdom of Bahrain, namely, the Sustainable Development Award ceremony hosted by Bahrain on 23 September on the margins of the General Assembly. There, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa's Sustainable Development Award was presented to Professor Anna Tibaijuka, former Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), a deserving laureate. The presentation underlines the Kingdom's vision of sustainable development as a value that it not only seeks to achieve but also one that it seeks to promote by supporting all endeavours aimed at realizing it throughout the world.

The achievements of Bahraini women at the international level — notably by being elected to membership of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Executive Board of UN-Women and the fact that Bahrain received first place internationally for the highest growth rate of women's participation in economic activities, as documented in a report of the International Labour Organization this year — testify to the close cooperation between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Nations and the keen interest of my country, represented by the Supreme Council for Women under the leadership of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, in enhancing the empowerment of Bahraini women nationally and internationally and accelerating their participation in all Government and community sectors as a principal component that has contributed, and will continue to contribute, to the process of community development and progress.

"Development that does not have the citizen as its target is futile and undesirable". Those were the words of His Majesty the King at the launch of the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, clearly affirming that the well-being, happiness and stability of our citizens are the main pillars of development in all fields and that the Government's efforts to achieve the global development goals are in parallel with its national economic vision. The Government's action plan and its United Nations Development Programme country programme document both stress that Bahrain will continue to guarantee to all citizens, men and women alike, the enjoyment of all their constitutional rights. We shall steadfastly pursue our approach to progress, prosperity and advancement, despite all political and economic challenges and any attempt to divert us from our national task.

Development goes hand in hand with the security and stability of the individual citizen and of society at large. Neither can be achieved in isolation from the other, without a stable and secure State, with good governance and solid and effective institutions. Such is the road map that should be followed in all States generally and in the Middle East in particular, where the enormous challenges have been considered grave threats to international peace and security. It is for that reason that protection of the foundations of the nation State in our own countries and preventing their collapse in other countries is the basis for sustaining security, development and prosperity. It deserves to become the major objective of all actors and groupings of the international community, without double standards or hidden agendas. When united regionally and internationally, we are capable of addressing all those challenges, particularly terrorism.

We should jointly commit ourselves, without hesitation and in full determination, to eradicating all the underlying causes of terrorism, cutting off the sources of financing to terrorists and resolutely and vigorously protecting our societies from the discourse of hate and extremism. In that regard, we assert that anti-terrorism measures will not be effective through legislation and laws that contravene the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law. The approach taken by the United States Congress in passing the Justice against the Sponsors of Terrorism Act jeopardizes international relations based on the principle of the equal sovereignty of States and their sovereign immunity. It constitutes a dangerous precedent in relations between nations and threatens the stability of the international system, which in turn adversely affects international efforts to combat terrorism.

The question of displaced persons and refugees is among the serious issues generated by the situation prevailing in some countries in our region. It is negatively impacting development efforts and, if not resolved, will lead to more instability not just in the region, but throughout the world. The Syrian crisis, in all its phases and developments, constitutes the greatest human tragedy of our contemporary world. In a country that just a few years ago welcomed thousands of refugees, the Syrian population today is unable to live in peace and security on its own land. More than half of the Syrian people live as refugees or internally displaced persons, while the situation deteriorates day after day, creating a vacuum exploited by terrorist organizations to consolidate their position and threaten the entire region. We must, as an ethical and human imperative, address those threats, and the international community must act in unison to confront the problem from all angles.

We appreciate the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Lebanese Republic and the Republic of Turkey to mitigate the humanitarian predicament of Syrians. We invite the international community to aid the efforts of our countries. We commend the United Nations for its efforts in that respect, which recently culminated in the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants and the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1, annex). Follow-up actions to implement the provisions of the Declaration will undoubtedly have a positive impact.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has consistently supported the aspirations of the Syrian people to build, in accord with their own will, a civil State with a national fabric rich in cultural and human heritage and diverse in its various components, with a view to restoring the spirit of love and tolerance. We call on all States with leverage in the Syrian crisis, notably the United States and the Russian Federation, to join efforts to achieve a political solution to the crisis along the lines of the Geneva communiqué and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). Furthermore, it is imperative to implement Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), which stipulates the direct, unfettered and immediate delivery of humanitarian assistance to the entire Syrian territory, thereby saving that beloved country and its people from a tragedy we all want to see ended, avoiding the collapse of the remaining State institutions, preserving Syria's territorial integrity, eradicating all terrorist organizations at large in the country and putting an end to the regional meddling, whether direct or by proxy, that hinders the peaceful settlement of the crisis.

In the same vein, we encourage all efforts in Iraq to overcome the problems facing the reconstruction of the State and its institutions and the fulfilment of the will of the Iraqi people through the participation of all political factions, without external pressure. We stress the need for perseverance in the efforts to re-establish State authority over the entire national territory by ousting the terrorist organizations and to combat the criminal and inhumane practices of extremist militias against Iraqis and their neighbours under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

We look forward to the day when we shall see an independent Palestinian State, living in peace and security, side by side with the State of Israel. I have no doubt whatsoever that the people of the region, both Arabs and Israelis, are eager to see this day and look forward to a just and comprehensive peace. That hope remains contingent on Israel's admission that its security and stability cannot be ensured unless the same holds true for the Palestinian people. Israel needs to be serious about achieving a just and durable peace in the region, with Palestinians and Israelis alike feeling that they are safe and that their future and the future of their children are also safe. An end must be put to the practices that hinder the long-awaited peace, notably the violations against the sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque that offend the feelings of Muslims all over the world. All illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory should be dismantled. Recognition must be given to the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State, within the 4 June 1967 boundaries, with East Jerusalem as its capital, consistent with international law and instruments and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Israel should respond positively and in an open spirit to the Arab Peace Initiative, which is still valid and on the table. We continue to embrace the Initiative and shall not back down, as it offers the correct and appropriate approach to laying down the foundation of peace in the region and to promoting cooperation among its nations and States.

With respect to the situation in the Republic of Yemen, the commitment of the Kingdom of Bahrain, a member of the Arab coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen, will remain steadfast. Bahrain has spared no resources or blood to achieve this noble goal, and

we shall continue on that path, no matter how great the sacrifices, until the time when the legitimate Government under the leadership of His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour is in a position to take control of the entire territory of Yemen.

We underline the humanitarian role played by the coalition forces and their determination not to target civilians. We demand that the coup d'état forces and their supporters, whose ambition is to take control of the institutions of the State, immediately cease committing any negative actions that hinder stability. We do not stand against any Yemeni party, but we do stand by Yemen and the Yemeni people in their fight against all who try to harm Yemen or control it from outside. We will continue this support until a political settlement is reached and a peaceful solution that puts an end to the suffering of the Yemeni people is implemented.

Such a solution must safeguard the security, stability and unity of the Yemeni people in accordance with international terms of reference, notably the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and resolution 2216 (2015). We commend the efforts exerted by Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, and by the State of Kuwait to help find a settlement to the crisis.

With respect to Libya, that brotherly Arab country badly needs all parties to show solidarity, work together to get through the present difficult stage and overcome the challenges that the country faces. Those challenges are obstructing the people's aspirations to live in peace and enjoy the stability of a unified State with robust modern institutions. We welcome the formation of the Government of National Accord and stress the need to provide it with the necessary support in order for the Libyan House of Representatives to build the necessary confidence that will enable it to lead the country, discharge its duties and responsibilities and rid the country of terrorist organizations by eradicating them.

With respect to the issue of the Western Sahara, the Kingdom of Bahrain underlines the need to find a political settlement on the basis of the Moroccan initiative for self-government and the relevant Security Council resolutions, so that the territorial integrity of Morocco may be guaranteed and that the security and stability in the region may be enhanced. We welcome the return of Morocco to the African Union and the resumption of its vital role on the continent.

With regard to the Islamic Republic of Iran, we in the GCC and all Arab countries have spared no effort to build the best relations possible with that neighbouring country on the basis of good-neighbourliness and respect for the sovereignty of States, consistent with the practices and principles of international relations between States. We have not hesitated for an instant to build bridges and seek to improve relations with it. However, despite all these efforts and sincere wishes, there has never been a serious response from Iran. The efforts we undertook ended either in an impasse or with a creation of new problems and crises that obligated us to return to square one.

We still hear the same irresponsible sectarian discourse from Iran and have witnessed the damage done to our bilateral and multilateral relations. In the most recent incident, Iranian officials made false allegations against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is a country that plays a laudable role in efficiently providing hospitality, safety, protection and care for large numbers of pilgrims during the seasons of Hajj and Umrah. No one can deny or minimize the importance of those efforts.

We continue to face Iran's attempts to jeopardize our security and social peace through the support it provides to groups and militias under its authority, such as the terrorists of Hizbullah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. Iran also continues to occupy three Emirati islands in the Arabian Gulf and refuses mediation for a peaceful settlement.

The situation is clear, and there is no way that it will change if Iran does not undertake a comprehensive change in its foreign policies, put an end to its hostile policies and show an open attitude towards our countries. Doing those things would undoubtedly pave the way for the region to enter a new era of stability and development.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need to join efforts aimed at establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, notably nuclear weapons, in the Middle East, including the Arabian Gulf region, while stressing the right of countries to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. Nuclear power was created only to serve human beings and to improve their lives, not to harm them or be used as lethal weapons

that might obliterate entire cities and kill millions of innocent people.

We have before us an opportunity to overcome the challenges facing us and maintain the strength and cohesion of our nations and peoples. We belong to a region that has made tremendous human contributions and great civilizational achievements. Our region has contributed effectively to all that we witness and live out today by way of the human progress we have contributed to in various fields of endeavour, including the sciences. All of that was possible only because those who lived in the region did so in an atmosphere of full security and harmony, without divisions based on ethnic, ideological or religious differences. We should remember that fact as we work to build the future we seek for our countries and future generations with a view to making important contributions to human civilization that we can be proud of.

I would repeat here a few words by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa:

> "The Kingdom of Bahrain and its people epitomize the principles of friendship, tolerance, mutual respect and openness to the world. We are proud of our diversity and our solid belief that every individual has the right to enjoy a safe and decent life."

Those words, characteristic of the Kingdom of Bahrain and its citizens, clearly reflect the spirit of the region and the aspirations of its people.

I would like to conclude by saying that the Kingdom of Bahrain, with its leadership and enlightened people eager to embrace the love and peace of the world and all its peoples, will remain faithful to the lofty human values and principles on which we have prided ourselves since time immemorial. As we confront the challenges to the Kingdom's safety and achievements, we shall hold fast to these values, while remembering that they illuminate our path towards a safe and stable society in which everyone enjoys security, prosperity and progress.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of India.

Ms. Swaraj (India) (*spoke in Hindi; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): On behalf of India and on my own behalf, I congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his service to the United Nations, the largest peace movement in history.

A year has passed since I stood here at this hallowed rostrum to address the members of the international community (see A/70/PV.22). Since then, many things have changed in the world around us — some for the better, some for the worse, and many that have been a cause for great concern. There can be no better platform to ponder our actions and our achievements over the past year. We must remember that we will be defined not just by our actions but, equally, by our inaction.

A number of issues have been debated in the General Assembly, from the necessity of global partnerships in sharing new vaccines and promoting access to affordable drugs to counter antimicrobial resistance to the need for faster implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, from the challenges of ensuring well-ordered mobility of productive human resources to the necessity of adequate consultations with troop-contributing countries before framing mandates for United Nations peacekeeping operations. However, since my time is limited, I would therefore focus on only some of the most pressing issues facing the international community.

The true challenges of our time are to end the curse of harsh poverty, which still lurks in so many corners of our world, to ensure that the fruits of growing prosperity reach those who need it most, to take forward the mission of gender equality and protect women where progress on gender issues has lapsed, and to ensure peace across borders, not least because there can be no prosperity without peace.

I congratulate the President of the General Assembly for giving priority to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by making them central to the theme of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. I am happy that the 17 Goals adopted by the Assembly are in line with the development vision of my Government, which has been geared in recent years towards the achievement of these very objectives.

Under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign — the Clean India mission — more than 400,000 toilets have been constructed in over 200,000 schools. Similarly, in terms of gender equality, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign — Educate the Girl Child, Save the Girl Child programme — has become a nationwide movement led

by women. The Make in India initiative is receiving international acclaim. Under the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana initiative, the largest financial inclusion programme the world has ever seen, nearly 250 million bank accounts have been opened for the poor. Digital India is transforming the country. Under the Skill India Initiative, a number of programmes have been undertaken to enable young people to take advantage of the demographic dividend. Those initiatives have added a new dimension to India's growth story, making it the fastest-growing major economy in the world at a time of slow global growth.

We are all aware that one sixth of humankind lives in India. Accordingly, global success in realizing the SDGs depends on the success achieved in India. We are committed to the wholehearted implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a national effort. We have decided to dedicate one day in each session of our Parliament to discussions relating solely to the SDGs, which will enable us to consistently monitor the progress made on them and give us good results. However, for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a globalized world, national efforts need to be supplemented by international cooperation.

Climate change is yet another serious challenge we are having to confront. There are enough resources on this planet to fulfil everyone's needs, but not enough to satisfy anyone's greed, for greed is limitless. In that context, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has championed a new concept, namely, climate justice. If we respect nature, nature will respect and nurture us and future generations. However, if we exploit nature mindlessly then we must be mindful that nature will unleash its fury upon us. In different parts of the world, we have already seen nature drift towards the unnatural — from torrential rains to excessive heat, from tsunamis to storms and cloudbursts.

We must curb reckless consumption and adopt lifestyles in harmony with nature. Yoga, the storehouse of India's ancient wisdom, epitomizes a sustainable lifestyle. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the unprecedented global response to the International Day of Yoga, which has been celebrated for the past two years.

In the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities has been acknowledged and accepted. That makes it clear that, while our responsibility is common, our obligations are different. Developed nations must discharge their responsibility in the search for the common good through finance and technology transfer.

India has launched an ambitious domestic effort to transform our energy mix and attain 40 per cent energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. The massive investments required entail a predictable and stable environment, towards which we are actively working. Additionally, our ground-breaking initiative for an International Solar Energy Alliance is intended to make efficient solar technology available for all.

I assure the General Assembly that India will continue to play a leading role in combating climate change. We have carefully chosen the date to submit our instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which will be 2 October, the anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, who epitomized a lifestyle with the smallest possible carbon footprint.

Let me now turn to a subject of critical importance, and which deeply concerns every member of the Assembly. This month we marked the fifteenth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on this city. Tragically, less than 15 days ago, another attempt at killing innocents was made in an act of terror on this same city. We, who have suffered in Uri, Kashmir, recently, understand the pain inflicted by the same forces. The world has been battling this scourge for a very long time. However, despite the blood and tears of innocent victims, attacks this year alone in Kabul, Dhaka, Istanbul, Mogadishu, Brussels, Bangkok, Paris, Pathankot and Uri, as well as the daily barbaric tragedies in Syria and Iraq, remind us that these malevolent forces have yet to be defeated.

We must acknowledge that terrorism is undoubtedly the greatest of all violations of human rights. We must accept this fact as a first principle. Terrorism targets the innocent and kills indiscriminately. Having gone far beyond affecting individuals or nations, it is a crime against humanity itself. But it is important to ask: who is behind this and who benefits from it? Terrorists do not own banks or weapons factories, so let us ask the question of who finances these terrorists, who arms them and who provides them sanctuary. Similar questions were asked by the Vice-President of Afghanistan from this rostrum a few days ago (see A/71/PV.11).

History proves that those who plant the seeds of extremist ideology reap a bitter harvest. The contagion of evil seen in small terrorist groups has grown into a hydra-headed monster backed by technological sophistication that threatens the peace and harmony of our world. We will not be able to win the fight against terrorism by making specious distinctions between the problems of one group and the problems of others — between terrorists who attack some and those who attack others. We do not know who will be the next victim of Frankenstein's monster.

If we want to defeat terrorism, therefore, there is only one way, that is, to unite despite our differences, add steel to our resolve and inject urgency into our response. We need to forget our prejudices and join hands to draw up an effective strategy against terror. That is not an impossible task, provided that we have the will. We can do it, and we must do it; otherwise, future generations will forever hold us to account. And if any nation refuses to join the global strategy, then we must isolate it. That is my simple demand.

There are nations in our midst that still speak the language of terrorism. They nurture it, peddle it and export it. Sheltering terrorists has become the calling card of such nations. We must identify those nations and hold them to account. The nations in which United Nations-designated terrorists roam freely and which lead demonstrations and deliver their poisonous sermons of hate with impunity are as culpable as the very terrorists whom they harbour. There should be no place for such countries in the community of nations.

On 21 September, the Prime Minister of Pakistan used this rostrum to make baseless allegations about human rights violations in my country (see A/71/PV.11). I can say only that those accusing others of human rights violations would do well to look within and see what egregious abuses they are perpetrating in their own countries, including in Baluchistan. The brutality against the Baluch people represents the worst form of State oppression.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan also said that India had come up with preconditions for talks that he found unacceptable. What preconditions was he talking about? Did we impose any preconditions before extending an invitation to him to attend our Government's oath-taking ceremony? Did we impose any preconditions when I went to Islamabad for the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and agreed to commence the comprehensive bilateral dialogue with Pakistan? Did we impose any preconditions when Prime Minister Modi travelled from Kabul to Lahore? What preconditions? What are we talking about?

We took the initiative to resolve issues not on the basis of conditions, but on the basis of friendship. That is the truth. We have in fact attempted to establish an unprecedented paradigm of friendship in the past two years. We conveyed Eid greetings to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, wished success to his cricket team and extended good wishes for his health and well-being. Did any of that come with preconditions attached?

And what did we get in return? Pathankot, Bahadur Ali and Uri? Are we imposing preconditions or are the Pakistanis now going in a different direction? Bahadur Ali is a terrorist in our custody whose confession is proof of Pakistan's complicity in cross-border terror. But when confronted with such evidence, Pakistan continues to deny it. Pakistan persists in the belief that such attacks will enable it to acquire the territory it covets. My firm advice to Pakistan is to abandon that dream. Let me state unequivocally that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so. That is why Pakistan should abandon that dream.

As I said at the outset, we will be judged by both our action and our inaction. What goals have we achieved and what objectives remain unfulfilled? The first pending task for the Assembly is the adoption of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism, which was proposed by India in 1996. In 2016, despite the fact that two decades have elapsed, we have yet to conclude an agreement. As a result, we are unable to develop a standard under which terrorists shall be prosecuted or extradited. I therefore appeal to the General Assembly that it act with fresh resolve and urgency to adopt that critical convention.

The second pending task is Security Council reform. Just as we need a more contemporary approach to combating terrorism, we also need a less outdated Security Council, which currently reflects the world order of a bygone era. The vast majority of nations share the belief that the United Nations should not remain frozen in 1945, which serves only the interests of a few. Whether it is a question of institutions or issues, we must come to terms with present-day realities and the challenges we have before us. An expansion in the permanent and non-permanent Council categories of

membership in order to reflect contemporary realities is therefore an urgent necessity. We must move forward substantively through the intergovernmental negotiations towards a text-based negotiation.

If both of the long-pending issues that I mentioned are addressed during the presidency of Mr. Thomson, then the success of the seventy-first session will be assured.

The twenty-first century has begun in the shadow of turmoil, but we can turn it into a golden age in the history of civilization through united and concerted efforts. But we must remember that what happens tomorrow will depend on what we do today.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Balakrishnan (Singapore): It is a special honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of Singapore, a tiny island city-State that is sometimes referred to as a tiny red dot.

The United Nations is essential for our survival and prosperity, as it is in particular for all small States. We are usually on the receiving end of the decisions and actions of large Powers. Fortunately, the General Assembly affirms the principle that all nations, large or small, rich or poor, have an equal stake and an equal right to participate in shaping the discourse on global issues.

The year 2016 has been a year of increased uncertainty and volatility. We have seen sluggish growth and poor job creation in the major economies, which have been accompanied by growing xenophobia and disillusionment with mainstream politics. We have witnessed rising nationalism, populism and protectionism, which have clouded the political discourse and confounded electoral outcomes everywhere. The conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya continue unabated, with serious repercussions beyond the region, including causing unprecedented flows of refugees. Terrorism remains a clear and present threat to international peace and security, which has been amplified by social media, and has been used so skilfully by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and other terrorist groups to spread radical ideas and promote violent extremism.

South-East Asia, the region where I come from, has also become a fertile recruiting ground for ISIS. In fact, we know that more than 1,000 men and women, including some Singaporeans, have gone to the Middle East to fight for ISIS. Those people have been indoctrinated with extremist ideology, trained with combat skills and killed people — and everyone knows that it is always easier to kill the second time around. They will further pose a significant risk as they seek to promote violence at home, overthrow legitimate Governments and establish a caliphate in South-East Asia. Singapore is committed to working with its friends and partners to address the threat of violent extremism and terrorism by exchanging intelligence and sharing our own experience with deradicalization programmes.

While that is taking place, we also recall the Ebola virus epidemic in 2014 and the current zika infections. They are stark reminders that global health remains a concern. We all need to work with the World Health Organization to keep our countries safe, while remaining open, connected and functioning.

In an uncertain world, small States like Singapore will have to work that much harder just to stay afloat. Small boats on a rough sea are much more likely to be tossed and overturned than a large tanker with heavy ballast. For our survival and our prosperity, small States have to stay open and connected to the world. But, by definition, our very openness makes us vulnerable to external shocks and threats. Small States like ours do not have the option of retreating inwards or opting out of the global system.

It is a reality that the world will become more and more interdependent. In such an environment, no country can succeed on its own, even if a country is not an island State like mine. To achieve global security and prosperity, we need to work with one another to seek win-win outcomes. I realize that, inevitably, there will be competition and rivalry between States, especially among the major Powers. But I want to make this point: relations between States need not be a zero-sum game. All countries benefit when there is peace and stability, and that is essential for building partnerships and economic cooperation everywhere.

Three elements are crucial for the survival and prosperity of small States: first, a rules-based multilateral world order; secondly, international partnership and cooperation; and, thirdly, sustainable development. Allow me to elaborate.

On the first point, a rules-based multilateral system enables all States to deal with each other in a fair,

transparent and predictable manner. The United Nations represents an international world order based on rules, norms and principles. We emphatically reject the notion that might is right. That is why small States are often the strongest proponents of the United Nations. For us, the United Nations represents a rules-based international order, and we believe that is a precondition for our very existence as independent, sovereign States.

The second essential element is international partnership and cooperation. Some of the most significant challenges of our time are transnational in nature. Examples include global economic growth, climate change, epidemics and terrorism. Therein lies the importance of the United Nations.

The recent successful conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change last November was a good example of how countries around the world could come together to solve a problem posed to the global commons. That the Paris Agreement will likely enter into force less than seven months after it was opened for signature is a confidence-booster for the United Nations system. Singapore is proud to have played its part by actively participating in negotiations and to have been part of the early wave of countries that deposited their instruments of ratification at the high-level event on the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change on 21 September this year.

A collective voice for small States speaks louder, and our collective action has been an effective catalyst for change at the United Nations and globally. I am pleased to note that, under the chairmanships of Grenada, Nauru and now Maldives, the Alliance of Small Island States played a catalytic role during the climate-change negotiations. Similarly, the Forum of Small States brings together 107 member States to exchange ideas and support each other in our common concerns. The Global Governance Group, also known as the 3-G, provides a platform for approximately 30 small and medium-sized countries to exchange views on global governance and contribute to the discussions of the Group of 20 (G-20). The 3-G has helped to channel the views of a broad range of countries to the G-20 presidency, thereby making the G-20 process more inclusive.

The third important element for the survival and prosperity of small States is sustainable development. Singapore believes that there are two key prerequisites for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The first prerequisite is the rule of law. I made the point earlier that, at the international level, a rules-based system is essential for all States, especially small States, in order for us to cooperate and to safeguard our rights. But a commitment to the rule of law at the domestic level is equally important. Without good governance, transparency, strong institutions and a clear legal framework, development can neither be sustainable nor benefit ordinary people.

The second prerequisite in that context is international partnerships. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be achieved only through collaboration and partnership. Multilateral processes, such as the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in Ecuador in October, are important avenues to help advance the SDGs, especially SDG 11. The draft new urban agenda to be adopted by the Habitat III Conference will highlight the link between urbanization and sustainable development and provide a framework for cities and Governments around the world to collaborate and find sustainable solutions.

Another important issue that requires cooperation involves the sustainable management of our forests, the prevention of land degradation and the loss of biodiversity form. This issue is addressed by SDG 15 in the 2030 Agenda. In South-East Asia, transboundary haze from forest and peatland fires started by human beings have impaired the health of millions of people, compromised the safety of aircraft navigation, damaged our regional economies and accelerated climate change. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted a road map to achieve what we hope will be a haze-free ASEAN by 2020. We need to strengthen partnerships among Governments, the private sector, civil-society organizations and other important stakeholders with a view to addressing the root of the problem. That is a long-term challenge that requires sustained attention and continued collaboration among countries in our region and beyond.

Developing countries need international support and assistance in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Singapore is fully committed to helping other developing countries build capacity and enhance human capital, and I declare this on behalf

of a country that has only human resources and human capital to offer.

Since 1992, the Singapore Cooperation Programme has provided training to more than 100,000 officials from other developing countries. Last year, in a statement made at the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, we launched from this rostrum (see A/70/PV.10) a new sustainable development programme through which we are working with such United Nations agencies as the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Water and UN-Habitat to support fellow developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Singapore has also tailored training programmes for small island developing States in areas including sustainable development, climate change and public governance.

Small States make up more than half of the States Members of the United Nations. To quote Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's statement at the twentieth anniversary of the Forum of Small States, in 2012,

> "Being small does not mean the absence of big ideas".

> The Secretary-General has been a strong supporter of small States, and we thank him for his leadership and support. I think we should also recognize the important contributions he has made to sustainable development and climate change during his two terms as Secretary-General.

In conclusion, let me say that small States, despite our size, have made significant contributions to the international community. We have helped to build consensus and find solutions to key global issues, including climate change. Small States can play an even greater role, provided we work together. Ultimately, small States need the United Nations to create the framework for building partnerships, promoting mutual development and pursuing peace and security within a rules-based multilateral system.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Filipe Lopes Tavares, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Communities and Defence of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

Mr. Lopes Tavares (Cabo Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is with great pleasure that we participate in this session of the General Assembly under the wise presidency of Mr. Peter Thomson, at a time when we are facing great challenges and witnessing humankind's legitimate desires and aspirations for a world of greater justice and solidarity. We are particularly proud and pleased to see a representative from a small island developing State conducting the work of the Assembly. We wish him every success during his term in office and assure him of the full cooperation and readiness of the delegation of Cabo Verde.

We also express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for his excellent work and congratulate him on his tireless efforts and dedication, as well as the transparent and inclusive manner in which he conducted the process of hearing candidates for the position of Secretary-General. We are certain that, under his guidance, the steps taken in the process of reform that is under way in the Organization were important ones.

On behalf of the Government of Cabo Verde, we would also like to applaud and thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as we approach the end of his two terms in office. We are grateful for his work and efforts aimed at building international peace and security, seeking relationships based on greater solidarity, brotherhood and fairness, combating poverty and pursuing balanced and sustainable development for all. As a small island developing State, Cabo Verde greatly appreciated his dedication to building a better world, in particular his contribution in successfully organizing and holding the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa, and for bringing about the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sutainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. With regard to the Paris Agreement, Cabo Verde is pleased with the number of States that have ratified it since April.

As a small island State, Cabo Verde bases its foreign policy on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and is certain that multilateralism is the most appropriate way to approach issues on the international agenda. Cabo Verde advocates for, and gives priority to, the consensus to keep pursuing international peace and security, promoting and fostering dialogue in conflict resolution and defending international law as indispensable elements for the advancement of humankind.

We note with concern that armed conflicts are proliferating in general, but more particularly

in Africa and the Middle East. We have seen the resurgence of instability in several areas of the world, the unprecedented humanitarian crisis leading to the high number of refugees, irregular migrations, massive violations of human rights, poverty and lack of social cohesion, the widening of the inequality between rich and poorer nations, increasing acts of terrorism and atrocities and the growth of transnational crime, in particular drug trafficking. All of those phenomena, which we have been closely observing and cannot ignore, call for and compel us to act collectively.

The conflicts and sources of tension that persist on the African continent continue to be a concern for us, particularly the situations in Libya, South Sudan, Somalia and Mali. Cabo Verde supports the African Union in the search for solutions to those problems affecting the peace and security of our sister nations. Also with respect to our continent, we welcome Morocco's recent decision to rejoin the African Union. We hope that the reasons that compelled its withdrawal will be resolved in the framework of strengthened regional cooperation among the members of the Arab Maghreb Union, thereby contributing to stability and security in the Sahel region.

With respect to the Middle East, Cabo Verde understands the urgency of finding solutions to existing conflicts and encourages the pursuit of negotiations as the sole means to that end. We wish to specifically refer to the need to resume negotiations leading to a lasting peace that would allow both States — Israel and Palestine — to live side by side in peace and security. In addition, we encourage the continuation of efforts to seek a negotiated solution in Syria that would put an end to the conflict and the suffering of the Syrian people.

Terrorism is a phenomenon that affects all countries and all regions of the planet either directly or indirectly, and no one can remain indifferent to the immense suffering and violence it brings to entire populations. As a global problem, it is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and it therefore requires a global response. No country — large or small, rich or poor — is in a position to fight it alone or effectively.

Cabo Verde condemns, without reservations, acts of terrorism in any form or manifestation. We reaffirm our willingness and readiness to cooperate with other States, as well as with the United Nations system, to implement recommendations aimed at preventing and combating this threat. Accordingly, Cabo Verde welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, launched in January, as well as the results of the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Taking into account the iniquities and inequalities that exist everywhere in some form, it is the understanding of my Government that such a scenario compels us to join forces in our efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Optional Protocols thereto constitute the basis for building more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, with fundamental rights and freedoms at the core of their development. In addition, we consider the role of institutions advocating in favour of human rights and civil society to be indispensable in promoting the rights inherent to human beings.

As was highlighted in the high-level thematic debate on human rights last July, under the theme "Human rights at the centre of the global agenda", the challenges associated with climate change, terrorism, violent extremism, conflicts and humanitarian crises require not only coordinated actions on all levels, but also the continuous fostering of good governance and the rule of law.

Massive violations of those rights and the denial of civil, political, social and cultural rights hinder the full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the protection of and the enjoyment of rights by the most vulnerable populations. We are also convinced that the right to development constitutes a basic principle for social cohesion and the reduction of social inequalities within and among nations. As we celebrate the thirty-first anniversary of the Vienna Declaration on the Right to Development, it is important that the principles established therein be observed and fulfilled. With respect to protecting the most vulnerable, Cabo Verde welcomes the Political Declaration adopted at the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS (resolution 70/266) in June, which advocates for access to treatment, particularly for the most vulnerable, based on the principle of non-discrimination and non-stigmatization.

Cabo Verde recognizes and is concerned with the humanitarian crisis resulting from the large number of refugees and migrants and welcomes the organization and adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1, annex)

during the high-level meeting on migrants and refugees on 19 September. We believe that a significant part of the current difficulties may be overcome through the effective implementation of the planned global compacts on responsibility-sharing for refugees and on safe, regular and orderly migration, which are expected to be adopted next year. Furthermore, we call for the correct implementation of the international conventions related to that issue and stress the need to fight against the root causes of such phenomena.

The theme chosen for this General Assembly session, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", could not have been more appropriate. The choice was judicious and pertinent. It was judicious because a significant portion of the work and attention of the United Nations upto 2030 will indeed focus on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and it was pertinent because, one year after the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda, we have the opportunity to express our points of view on how we intend to achieve the Goals that we established and overcome the challenges that persist and that could jeopardize the global commitment to leave no one behind.

For us, the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development implies enhancing the means of implementation, particularly financing, technology transfer, capacity-building and participation in international trade. Furthermore, we will need to develop the capacity to implement and follow up on a system to monitor national and regional policies, of which the United Nations system must be aware.

The devastating consequences of natural disasters resulting from climate change, which have a significant impact on the poorest and most vulnerable countries, remind us of the urgency of implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the importance of implementing the recommendations of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Developing a low-carbon economy and creating resiliency and capacity to adapt are no longer just an option for many. They have become essential requirements to build a sustainable economy, particularly in island and archipelago countries, whose survival is being threatened by climate change.

Despite the challenges inherent in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, its ambitious nature offers a unique opportunity to promote international solidarity and cooperation at an unprecedented level in the history of humankind. It is therefore against that backdrop that the United Nations system will be called upon to work as a unified front, avoiding duplication, increasing the monitoring and application of capacity at the national and regional levels, identifying emerging challenges, offering solutions that are not one-size-fits-all, and respecting the idiosyncrasies and specific contexts of each country.

I cannot conclude without noting that Cabo Verde, as a small island State, is striving for the development of a sustainable and dynamic economy with a robust private sector and strengthened regulatory institutions. In order to build a resilient economy that is in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the Government that I am honoured to be a part of plans to develop strategic partnerships so as to reduce risks and minimize weaknesses. However, the challenge facing a small and vulnerable country such as Cabo Verde goes beyond our national capacity to mobilize technical and financial resources and calls for more coordinated and predictable support from the international community in general and the United Nations system in particular.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Frederick Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): Next year at this time, general elections will have been held in the Bahamas. That means that this is the last time that I will address the General Assembly in the present term. For me, it has been a special privilege — one that I have cherished since I first stepped up to this rostrum back in 2002. I wanted to do something special this year, which is why I have the honour of having with me some of my constituents from the Bahamas, and in particular some of the religious and civic leaders of the community of Fox Hill, which I represent: Reverend J. Carl Rahming and Mrs. Rahming, Bishop Carrington Pinder and Mrs. Pinder, Reverend Hartman Nixon and Mrs. Nixon, Reverend Daniel Hall and Mrs. Hall, Reverend Warren Anderson and Mrs. Anderson and Reverend Sherelle Saunders. I also recognize the opposition's spokesman on foreign affairs, the Shadow Minister Hubert Chipman MP and his wife.

It is the policy of the Government of the Bahamas that there should be, insofar as is possible, a multi-partisan consensus on foreign affairs so that there is a seamless transfer of ideas and policies among the

parties. Furthermore, the civic leaders are here because I wanted to show them that, contrary to a prevailing narrative, foreign affairs is not some esoteric academic discipline, but is a real-life exercise connected to the real lives of the people in my constituency and to all the ordinary people around the world. I am glad that they are here.

Jack Lew, the Treasury Secretary of the United States, talked in a recent television interview about the value of starting a bank account, the value of saving and the importance of the involvement of ordinary people in the economy of his country. It was a telling message. But throughout the Caribbean — where the tradition has been to provide a child at birth with a bank account as a gift at the christening — it has become very difficult for a child, not to mention an adult, to open a bank account, so much so that many argue that there is a disincentive to joining the financial system.

Indeed, not only is that a problem in the Caribbean, but a British Minister told me about how one of the leading politicians in his country could not open an account for his 12-year-old daughter because she is what is called a politically exposed person. That is obviously wrong. The problem is that the overregulation imposed on countries by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has led to negative unintended consequences. Suddenly, being a politician or in a politician's family is to run the risk of being refused normal banking services around the world because the risks are too high. That is wrong.

I started my remarks with that concern in order to bring home starkly what all countries from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region have described as the dangers of de-risking. What I have described is a part of that whole cloth. Banks in the developed world, principally in the United States, are in some cases refusing to cash the checks of some Caribbean banks because they say the risk of policing the CARICOM banks on the issue of compliance with the new rules is too high and the business that banks get from such transactions is too low. So, such services have been stripped away across the Caribbean.

This is the same Bahamas and Caribbean that tens of millions of people from the United States and Europe visit every year. The visitors expect that all the modern conveniences and services will be available when they land to dip their toes in the water and sun themselves on the beach. The Caribbean islands that are described in their tourist brochures as paradises are being treated by the developed country banks as if they are Sodom and Gomorrah thanks to the new financial rules. The financial regulators use pejorative expressions like "tax havens" and impose unfair rules and sanctions on those societies, which may prevent valuable remittances being sent to people back home or prevent the payment of the school fees of Bahamian and CARICOM students abroad. While such destruction is being wrought on those same small countries, they are being asked and lobbied to vote for one cause or another in the interest of the developed countries. But what many of our leaders and peoples are asking is, "Where is the quid pro quo in all of this?"

No CARICOM country, including the Bahamas, is shielding anyone involved in unlawful behaviour. All applicable agreements are adhered to and are complied with in connection with money-laundering and the unlawful evasion of taxes. The attacks on the Bahamas and the CARICOM region are inaccurate and unjust. The recent attacks in the press about the Bahamas financial services sector are simply reprehensible and represent violations of international norms. We reject them. Normally, one does not seek to make a moral case in this forum. But there is a dubious moral equivalence that is being argued by the developed countries. They argue that, even though they have laws regarding the protection of privacy and private property from illegal seizure by the State, even though our countries are independent and free to do as they wish, the fact that our countries serve as bankers for those seeking to take advantage of tax competition is somehow immoral because it robs the developed world of legitimate revenue. But that is simply not true.

The evidence is that the wealth accumulated in offshore sectors goes back to the developed countries and the offshore sectors are therefore of benefit to the developed world. We can present another moral argument. If the societies of the Caribbean collapse because of overregulation by other countries, then the result of the destruction of millions of families would be the greater moral wrong. If one then argues that it is immoral to evade one's responsibility to pay taxes at home — we agree — we argue that you have a moral responsibility to understand that overregulating, changing the goalposts, not creating a level playing field in the financial services sector and de-risking can bring about an immoral result. That problem must be

solved by those who imposed the regulations. It is a moral imperative.

The Bahamas has been pleased to join the United States of America and others in the Safe Ocean Network, a global initiative aimed at all aspects of the fight against illegal fishing, including detection, enforcement and prosecution. On last Wednesday, I had the privilege of depositing our instruments of accession to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. The desire for the safe governance of the oceans has also informed the decision of the Bahamas to seek another term on the Council of the International Maritime Organization, where we have established a reputation for upholding the highest standards of maritime safety, security and environmental protection. I ask for the support of Member States for the re-election of the Bahamas to that Council.

We need a broadening and modernization of the development-financing indicators used to assess development level and development needs. We have stated, and continue to argue, that gross domestic product per capita should not be the primary determinant that determines whether a country qualifies for international economic assistance or concessional access to development financing.

As a demonstration of the importance that the Bahamas attaches to the advancement of women, Ms. Marion Bethel was nominated for a seat on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and was elected in May. We believe that Ms. Bethel will contribute to CEDAW's efforts to advance women's empowerment and gender equality. We expect that her experiences on that body will increase knowledge in the Bahamas relative the advancement of women.

A more vexing problem is how to ensure that young males in our society do not fall behind. In all areas of academics, young males struggle to survive and keep up and prepare for participation in our societies. The Government has turned its attention now to remedial measures to ensure that they do not fall further behind. I am proud to say that there are two young males from the Abaco Islands who have joined us as the winners of a student contest that enabled them to win an opportunity to see this event. They are joined by a young female. We are proud to see them here. There is a larger fight for the integration of all young men and women into the formal economy. Young people are the future, and we have to ensure that they understand and see that those processes are included in the general economy.

I am pleased to announce that the Bahamas is seeking election for membership in the Human Rights Council for the term 2019 to 2021. I ask for the support of all Member States for the Bahamas to be elected to that Council.

Each day, our country of 400,000 people faces incursions from Haiti and Cuba by people seeking a better way of life. Those incursions are unsustainable and expensive to police and prevent. That is why we are working with Cuba and Haiti on that sensitive and vexing issue, as well as with the United States, which is the destination of choice. That is also all the more reason why attention must be paid to closer and more normal relations between the United States and Cuba. We will also support the continued call for an end to the economic embargo on Cuba when the vote comes before the United Nations shortly. Our country is really pleased that elections will be held in Haiti next month. The Bahamas has pledged to provide observers to those elections.

We wish to thank the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership, vision and tireless efforts. We thank him for his service and wish him well in the future.

We are in the midst of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent. The CARICOM region and the Bahamas are largely an African diaspora. During the decade, we have seen a man of African descent become the head of the most powerful country in the world. Thousands of Bahamians and people across the Caribbean took pride in that example of success. We wish him well as he leaves office.

There was a picture of a little black boy in the Oval Office of the United States. In the picture, the President is bending down and allowing that boy to touch his hair. The little boy, it seemed, wanted to be sure that someone like him with hair like his was actually the President of the United States. That is the background against which people of African descent encounter negativity all around the world. Thousands of little black boys and girls in the Bahamas have taken the success of the President of the United States as an affirmation of hope.

The wave of shootings by police officers in the United States must not be allowed to damage that image of that country. We think that it is imperative for our closest neighbour, the United States, to understand that in the International Decade for People of African Descent it must do the right thing.

The President of the United States affirmed that he believes in a liberal democracy. We support that position. All of the CARICOM countries, including the Bahamas, are shining examples, without exception, of liberal democracies. They feature ideological pluralism, capitalist economies, multiparty States, regular elections, independent judiciaries with low levels of institutional corruption and regular public consultations on policies. This world body, then, has a stake in ensuring that the societies of the CARICOM region survive. Michael Manley, the late national hero of Jamaica, made that point in this very forum many decades ago.

Three successive Popes — John Paul II, Benedict and Francis — have all decreed that capitalism must operate with a moral conscience. Our countries all operate within that milieu. The Christian values of tolerance and respect for the sanctity of the individual and the rule of law remain firm. The millions of tourists who visit the region can attest to that fact.

I end where I began, on de-risking and the issues of climate change. With so many positive attributes, why does it appear that so much is being done to ignore and undermine the success of our societies, which are shining examples of what the world says that it desires? It is morally perplexing and legally indefensible. We are small, and we have no armies to deploy to impose a result. We cannot force results. To paraphrase an American judge, we have only our voice and with that voice we say today: the moral cry for help is the moral demand for rescue. The United Nations is where we have a level playing field. It is the appropriate forum to make our case. That is so whether the issue is banking, financial services, climate change, sustainable development, financing for development, migration or simply survival.

Scripture tells us: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs". It also says, "Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me." Therefore, as a representative of "the least of these", we use our moral voice today to say that now, more than ever, we need the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call upon His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): This year, the people of Eritrea have been celebrating the silver jubilee of their country's independence in 1991. During the difficult years of the war for independence, very few people believed that Eritreans and their leadership were capable of that historic achievement, as the odds were overwhelmingly stacked against them.

Unlike in other liberation struggles, it was both super-Powers — the United States and the Soviet Union, and not just one or the other — that sought to crush by armed force Eritrea's aspirations for self-determination. Nevertheless, the Eritrean people and their liberation movement — the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, the predecessor of today's People's Front for Democracy and Justice — believed in the justness of their cause and in their own determination and capability to win the war fair and square and prevail in the unequal battle.

The post-independence struggle to build a nation has also been complex and difficult. We have been compelled to commit precious human and economic resources to defend ourselves against wars of aggression and subversion. We have suffered the occupation of our sovereign territory in violation of international law and a binding international arbitration ruling. We have been subjected to incessant hostility, sanctions, economic, financial and diplomatic pressures, as well as armed attacks and psychological warfare.

Our people, particularly our youth, were targeted through policies that actively encouraged their migration, leading to much suffering and loss of life at the hands of human traffickers. The inevitable outcome of those policies was then presented as evidence against Eritrea. No less an authority than President Obama of the United States stated publicly that he had "renewed sanctions on some of the worst abusers, including... Eritrea". And he added, "We are partnering with groups that help women and children escape from the grip of their abusers". The objective was regime change, as a prelude to bringing Eritrea to its knees.

In the face of that concerted onslaught, few gave Eritrea a fighting chance. We were routinely written off, and our imminent collapse was predicted with regularity. However, once again, resilient Eritrea and Eritreans at home and abroad were able to forge the

capability to resist the onslaught on their nation and protect their hard-won freedom through their patriotism, cohesion, sheer determination and sacrifices. After a difficult decade and a half, Eritrea is now on the rise.

The majority of the Millennium Development Goals have been achieved. The economy is rebounding. Infrastructure is being built. Favourable conditions are being created to provide youth with ample opportunities for quality education, vocational skills, decent living conditions and active political participation. The country's regional and international engagement is growing. The counter-productive policy of isolating Eritrea is slowly but surely failing. The pressures, coercion and hostility that Eritrea has faced are by no means exceptional or distinctive. In our region, the Horn of Africa, they are but one element of a misguided policy pursued for over a quarter of a century that has fuelled violence, conflict, instability and fragmentation, as well as extremism and terrorism.

Throughout the world there are many nations that cherish dignity and independent decision-making, that uphold the sovereign equality of nations, that seek to chart political and economic paths suited to their conditions, and that seek to benefit from their human and natural resources. They have faced the wrath of those who wish to cling to their domination and privileges, and resort to all manner of coercion and subversion, including sanctions, blockades and armed interventions. Unsustainable policies of greed and pillage and the reckless resort to unilateral pressure and force in order to secure unilateral advantage, instead of seeking common ground and mutual interests, are leading the world down an extremely dangerous path. The very survival of the planet and humankind is in grave danger owing to unsustainable systems of production and consumption and the attendant large-scale wastage. In that context, Eritrea wishes to point out that the pending decision by the United States to adopt legislation that nullifies national sovereign immunity constitutes a violation of international law and a dangerous precedent with grave implications. Although the challenges and dangers we face are grave and stark, our world is still full of possibilities and opportunities.

The global balance of power and wealth is changing. It features new sources of growth, dynamism and innovation — not only in the celebrated emerging economies, but also in many other countries. In both industrialized and developing nations, ordinary people are making their voices heard and their actions felt by mobilizing, organizing and fighting against domination by a privileged few. They are fighting for a more equal and just world. Calls for the respect of international law and norms and for the overhaul and revitalization of the United Nations and global financial institutions — with a view of making them more representative and democratic — are widespread, insistent and often backed by concrete initiatives and concerted actions.

In our region, the Horn of Africa, the past two decades have generally been a period of missed opportunities, zero-sum games and repeated conflicts and setbacks. Even today, the situation remains fraught with risk and danger. Yet, recent developments indicate the possibility of a new beginning and a relaunching of the 1990s vision of a peaceful, progressive, economically dynamic and cooperative Horn of Africa.

Eritrea has often spoken of the hostilities and injustices that it has suffered, the difficulties it has faced and the valiant struggles of its people. That is an experience that it shares with many other peoples and nations. That experience informs our country's views and policies. Yet, Eritrea does not dwell on the past. Rather, it prefers to look to the future. It is keen on building on its encouraging achievements, so as to transform its economy and society and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by relying mainly on the energy, skills and initiative of its people and the judicious use of its natural resources.

It is also determined to work actively, constructively and in collaboration with its neighbours for peace, stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea regions. It seeks to foster relations of solidarity and mutual support with all nations, peoples and organizations that fight for a world free from the scourges of war and poverty and for the respect of human dignity. To conclude, Eritrea is resolved to engage with all nations in modesty and self-confidence.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wilfred Elrington, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Mr. Elrington (Belize): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election to preside over the seventy-first session of the Assembly. I wish to assure him of Belize's fullest support.

Thirty-five years ago, Belize became a State Member of the United Nations. Membership confirmed our independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and our place among equals in the community of nations. Regrettably, however, membership has not been able to resolve the territorial claim laid on our country some 80 years ago by Guatemala.

Our track record since our independence confirms that Belize holds sacrosanct the dignity of human beings, the principles of justice, equality, inclusivity and the rule of law. Belizeans are inherently altruistic and compassionate. In the nascent years of our independence, when civil war ravaged our Central American region, Belize was the beacon of hope and sanctuary of choice for thousands of refugees, including Guatemalans, desperately seeking to escape the scourges of war, poverty and oppression. Belize welcomed thousands of refugees, amounting to well in excess of 30 per cent of our population at the time. Indeed, even to this day, the flow of migrants into our country continues unabated. Belize is a nation of migrants living in unity, peace and harmony.

Our diversity, national identity and pride have long been a source of strength for our people. We have never cowered in the face of the repeated threats to our security by our neighbour, Guatemala. We remain steadfast in our resolve to protect and preserve our sovereignty and territorial integrity. Though many perils lurk along our forested borders and in our maritime and riverine territories, we have been protecting and patrolling our borders with determination, so as to ensure the safety and security of our beloved homeland. At the same time, our untiring diplomats have striven mightily to resolve the long-standing territorial dispute, which is our paramount foreign-policy concern, by using all the diplomatic channels and means at their disposal.

Regrettably, though not unpredictably, there have been hostile incidents between the civilian and military personnel of both Belize and Guatemala on our southern border on the Sarstoon River. Guatemalan naval personnel have repeatedly impeded the peaceful ingress and egress of civilian and military Belizeans on the river, wrongfully claiming that the river is theirs. However, as the northern side of the river is clearly Belizean territory, the unimpeded use and enjoyment of that side of the river is the right of every Belizean citizen. Belize has therefore promptly and properly protested each attempt to impede our citizens from using the river. Additionally, we have engaged our Guatemalan counterparts in dialogue under the good offices of the Secretary General of the Organization of American States with a view of putting a speedy end to that potentially perilous practice.

At the same time, the situation along our western border has also been vexing. Continuous illegal entry by armed trespassers from Guatemala have persisted despite the valiant efforts of our border patrol to deter them. The trespassers engage with impunity, day and night, in gold panning, hunting for wild game and birds, pillaging Mayan temples, logging illegally and cultivating crops, including marijuana, for commercial purpose. In the process, our priceless forest is being decimated, our potable and sea waters are being compromised, and our coral reefs are being choked to death by sediments that run off the denuded mountainsides after each torrential downpour.

Fully cognizant of the devastating environmental impact that such practices are having in neighbouring countries and further afield, Belize cannot afford to let the same thing happen to us. From time to time, in the course of attempting to apprehend the trespassers, firearms have been used by Belize security personnel and by the trespassers, who are invariably armed. Indeed, between September 2014 and March 2016, a Belizean Tourism Police officer was killed and a Belize Defence Force sergeant was ambushed and shot, though not fatally, by trespassers entering Belize from Guatemala.

Tragically, and much to Belize's regret, on 20 April 2016 a Guatemalan minor was fatally shot and his father and brother injured when they came in contact with a Belizean patrol in one of our protected national parks in the dead of night. The Belize Police forthwith began an investigation. Moreover, officials of the Organization of American States (OAS), stationed in the Adjacency Zone between Belize and Guatemala, immediately commenced their own investigation. And, at the specific behest of Guatemala, Belize requested the Secretary General of the Organization of American States to launch an official special independent investigation into the incident. The Organization of American States commissioned two senior eminently qualified specialists to undertake that special investigation, with the full knowledge and approval of the Guatemalan Government. At the time of their appointment, Guatemala expressed no reservations as to their competence, suitability or otherwise, to undertake that investigation. Last August, the Special

Commission delivered its findings to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States.

The report discloses that the deceased had been detained by security personnel in Belize a mere month prior to the incident. At the time of his detention, he was illegally carrying a .22-calibre rifle and was in illegal possession of wild game. He was neither mistreated, arrested nor prosecuted by the Belizean authorities. Instead, he was promptly sent back safely to his country. The report further discloses that the deceased, his brother, also a minor, and their father were knowingly and unlawfully well within Belizean territory on the night of the incident, and that none of the wounds inflicted was caused by weapons carried by personnel of the Belize Defence Force. The wounds were inflicted by small-calibre firearms carried on the night of the incident by two members of a local conservation-oriented non-governmental organization that was part of the Belize patrol. Shots were fired by both groups, the Guatemalans and the Belizean joint patrol, on that ill-fated night. And, the following morning, elements of the Guatemalan Army, along with civilians from a nearby Guatemalan village, entered Belizean territory illegally, visited the site, contaminated the scene and withdrew and withheld evidentiary material that could have been useful to the investigation.

In the wake of the incident, Guatemala launched a fanatical public-relations campaign against Belize, falsely alleging that the Belize Defence Force was responsible for the death of the minor. In addition, the Guatemalan President publicly announced the massing of troops along our western and southern borders.

However, the report of the Special Independent Commission chronicles what really took place on the night of the incident. The objective, impartial findings of fact established the correctness of Belize's position from the start, and the wholly erroneous nature of the allegations levelled against our country by Guatemala. The report completely absolves Belize of any and all blame for the incident. It makes manifest the wrongness of Guatemala's accusation against Belize and against the personnel of our Belize Defence Force. Guatemala has since then publicly rejected the Commission's report. However, it is certainly irresponsible, if not reprehensible and utterly unacceptable, that Guatemala should now seek to reject the results of a process that it had specifically requested and agreed to and which was conducted by OAS-appointed independent third-country professionals with impeccable credentials and with no axe to grind. Moreover, the wanton threat of the use of force by a nation against its neighbour is wholly uncalled for, recklessly dangerous and in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations and can in no way be countenanced.

Belize's only wish is to live in peace and harmony with all its neighbours, including Guatemala. We fully appreciate that with each passing day, with more and more Guatemalans trespassing into our country, despoiling our natural resources and engaging in illegal and destructive activities, the potential for violent incidents and conflicts has become increasingly probable and problematic. That situation makes a prompt and peaceful end to the anachronistic and unfounded territorial claim on our country an urgent imperative.

Belize acknowledges the centrality of the United Nations in the multilateral order and as a uniting force for championing the common good. Its leadership likewise remains central to international peace and security, to development and to the rule of law. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is truly a historical milestone for the entire world. The essence of sustainable development is entrenched in the Belize Constitution. Our economic development has fully embraced the indivisibility of social and environmental policies. From the early 1990s, Belize began to put in place development plans for its fledgling industries that are consistent with a progressive legal regime for environmental protection.

Complementary to those economic and environmental developments, Belize is incrementally providing free public education at the primary and secondary levels. It has established a Maya Land Rights Commission so as to implement measures for the identification and protection of rights arising from Mayan customary land tenure. It is rolling out a national health-insurance policy, and work is in progress to advance national efforts towards gender equality and equity.

The national debate on social issues recently took a turn that could set a precedent. A High Court ruling held that Section 53 of our Criminal Code, which criminalizes consensual sexual acts between same-sex partners, is unconstitutional. The ruling also expands the definition of "sex" to include sexual orientation. However, in response to the request of a not inconsiderable segment of our population, our

Government has launched a limited appeal against the judgment, challenging only the expanded definition of "sex" by the High Court.

In April, Belize was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We also commend the United States of America and China for their leadership for doing so as well. Belize fully supports efforts, under the auspices of the United Nations, to design a new international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, and welcomes the decision to convene a high-level United Nations conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 in June 2017.

In that spirit of inclusiveness, Belize urges that the Republic of China on Taiwan be accorded meaningful participation in the work of the United Nations. The Taiwanese Government has been working assiduously to promote international cooperation and development, in line with the spirit and principles of the Millennium Development Goals. It has also fully embraced the Sustainable Development Goals. We urge the international community to welcome Taiwan's meaningful participation in the mechanisms, meetings and activities of the United Nations specialized agencies, including the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Setbacks in the global economy and externalities resulting from institutional policies, both public and private, to safeguard against financial and other security risks, as well as the adverse impacts of climate change, have all conspired against Belize's sustainable development trajectory. Today, we are rebuilding our country in the aftermath of Hurricane Earl, which in less than eight hours resulted in the loss of some 5.5 per cent of our gross domestic product.

Belize fully endorses the views and sentiments that all other delegations have expressed in their pleas for urgent relief from the deleterious consequences of the decisions by global banks to withdraw correspondent banking relationships from our financial institutions.

Belize celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary of independence on the same day as the International Day of Peace. Peace and stability in our hemisphere are critical to the development and well-being of the peoples of the Americas. For that reason, Belize remains concerned about the status of the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela. We urge the Secretary-General to urgently exercise his authority under the 1966 Agreement to resolve the controversy over the frontier between Venezuela and British Guiana in order to arrive at a choice of options that would definitively settle the border controversy.

Belize strictly adheres to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. In that regard, we stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Venezuela in their efforts to resolve their domestic issues in accordance with their laws and Constitution. We also remain very concerned about the unabated cholera epidemic in Haiti, and urge the United Nations to take all necessary steps to help the Haitian people end that terrible scourge, occasioned by agents of the United Nations. Belize welcomes the tremendous progress already made in the peace process in Colombia, which we fully support. We look forward to an early and successful implementation of the agreement. We also commend the progress made in the bilateral relations between Cuba and the United States. Belize reiterates its call for an early end to the economic embargo against Cuba.

We join others in calling for an early end to the tragic conflicts in Syria and Libya, which are an affront to humanity. We adhere fully to the right of peoples to self-determination, and reiterate our solidarity with the struggle for liberation and independence of our Sahrawi brothers and sisters. Belize remains disheartened, although not discouraged, by the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that the only just solution to that conflict is one that results in two sovereign and independent States, living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders.

We stand in solidarity with South Korea in the face of North Korea's irresponsible experiments with nuclear and missile programmes, including the conduct of nuclear tests, in violation of Security Council resolutions. We join the international community in condemning those actions, which pose a clear and present danger not only to South Korea, but to the entire world.

While we are heartened by the indefatigable efforts of the United Nations and other philanthropic organizations and individuals to alleviate the suffering of migrants and other displaced persons worldwide, it is evident that much more needs to be done. We in Belize

pledge to do all in our power and within our means to discharge our obligations to all suffering persons who seek our succour.

In a country as small as Belize, in a world as big as ours, we are all citizens of planet Earth, big or small. The policies that we devise at any level must be reflective of that reality. It is up to us leaders, working together and shouldering our respective sovereign responsibilities, to ensure that every nation, large and small, and every individual, man, woman or child, shall have a say in our noble endeavours to achieve a more just, equitable and secure world. Our task is clear. Its attainment is not impossible, but neither is it without difficulty. Let us get it done. Belize stands ready to do its part.

In conclusion, as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is beginning to prepare to leave office at the end of 10 sterling years of service to the United Nations and to the world as a whole, Belize takes this opportunity to thank him and to wish him every success in his post-Secretary-General life. We also take this opportunity to thank the United States President, Barack Obama, as he too prepares to leave office later this year. We wish him every success in his post-presidential life.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Niermala Badrising, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Ms. Badrising (Suriname): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, I extend to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Thomson, congratulations on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. His wealth of experience will undoubtedly contribute to the successful discharge of his important duties.

I would like to pay tribute to outgoing Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his accomplishments in leading the Organization over the past 10 years and for his continuous endeavours to reorganize the United Nations. We especially applaud his efforts to promote sustainable development and his commitment to the betterment of the livelihood of vulnerable groups and to the advancement of women. The Government and the people of the Republic of Suriname wish the Secretary-General much success in his future, new challenges.

As we continue our deliberations and take decisions on pertinent issues with respect to the global agenda, the world is facing grave financial, economic, environmental and political crises. That situation is in contrast to what is needed for the sustainable development of all nations, namely, peace, political stability, democracy and universal access to our planet's resources.

At the same time, we are concerned by the multitude of challenges and threats that the world now faces in the political, security, economic and social realms. They include the global recession and economic slowdown, which have caused decreasing growth and productivity; worsening inequalities that are causing increased violence, political instability and social deterioration; transnational organized crime and terrorism; and digital and technological innovation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places human beings at the centre of development. The implementation of the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals gives us the opportunity to fight for a just world order in order to achieve peace, equitable power relations in the world, and political and social stability, as well as an equal distribution of wealth and opportunities for all. That would imply that eventually the eradication of poverty and the promotion of economic growth could be attained.

Nevertheless, there is a wide gap between what we promise our peoples in international and regional forums and what is actually achieved. Suriname believes that we must build peaceful and inclusive societies with equal opportunities for all. It is therefore essential that our social and economic order be structurally reformed and that we focus on advancing innovation and new technologies, human knowledge, capacities and skills. That is needed in order ultimately to find a solution that will create opportunities to accumulate knowledge, increase employment and social protection, enhance social inclusion and protect the environment, all of which will eventually lead to sustainable growth and stability.

It is not by chance that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also deals with migration, nor is it a coincidence that we have been discussing migration as a top priority of the international community. The movement of people across international borders — be it as migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers — continues to be one of the most important issues on the global policy agenda, for it has enormous economic, social and cultural implications. As far as refugees and asylum-seekers are concerned, Suriname holds the view that

international norms, values and principles must be upheld and that human rights must be respected.

Suriname attaches great importance to the principles of international law, under which we have committed both to refrain from unilateral interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and to respect their national sovereignty and territorial integrity. That is also essential for securing peace, international security and lasting prosperity for all nations, regions and peoples. We believe that the only way to create a culture of peace and justice is through dialogue, consensus-building and negotiated resolutions to conflicts. Long-lasting political stability requires that democracy and democratic principles be respected; democratic traditions must be upheld, and the legitimacy of democratically elected Governments must be recognized for the duration of their tenure.

A long-standing issue on our international agenda is the struggle of the Palestinian people. Suriname supports the two-State solution for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples in order to attain the political stability needed for their development. In our region of the world, South America, we welcome the historic peace agreement that is to be signed today between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. It upholds the principles of coexistence, cooperation and respect, and reinforces our hemisphere as a zone of peace, as declared in 2014 during the third Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. We also welcome the ongoing process to restore diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America, which will contribute to further enhancing peace, stability, unity and development in the Americas. We will continue to support the call by the international community to have the United States lift the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Global temperatures and sea levels are rising, ice caps are melting, and greenhouse-gas emissions are not yet diminishing. With a forest cover of well over 90 per cent and a deforestation rate of merely 0.02 per cent, Suriname is one of the few carbon-negative countries in the world. Its relatively small size and population — a surface area of 163,000 square kilometres and a population of 550,000 — make it particularly vulnerable to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks. In addition, as a country with a low-lying coastal zone and with the majority of its population and fertile soils at risk from the dangers of rising sea levels, Suriname's sustainable development efforts are under serious threat.

Nevertheless, we are still prepared to contribute to reducing greenhouse gases and to implementing even more ambitious policies. However, we cannot do that on our own, and we therefore call upon the international community not only to develop technical and financial support mechanisms within existing financial frameworks, but also to make new and additional financing available in order to support developing countries like ours. That will allow us to implement essential adaptation policies and programmes, compensate for losses and damages, develop technology and safeguard food production and food security.

The consequences of the global economic slowdown are being felt throughout the world, and Suriname has not been spared. Faced with a drop in the international prices of the commodities that we export, last year we were forced to implement an adjustment and reform programme that has imposed difficult but necessary adjustment measures. In order to ensure that the adjustment runs smoothly and to secure technical assistance for our reform programme, the Government of Suriname signed a stand-by arrangement with the International Monetary Fund early in 2016. In the light of the positive results achieved in a short period of time, we reiterate our intention to continue to work in close collaboration with the Fund, with the goal of securing macroeconomic stability and carrying out the institutional and legal reforms needed to restore economic growth and social stability.

We are confident that with international commodity prices on a steady path of recovery and with the grants and soft loans that we have been able to acquire through our friendly bilateral relationships and multilateral partners, as well as through international financial institutions such as the Caribbean Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, my country's development path will be back on track within the next two years.

We therefore thank all of those who have offered their assistance in recent years, and we also welcome foreign investors who wish to participate in our future development. Suriname is a country with many natural resources and excellent opportunities for outsourced production processes. We recognize that we will have to exploit our resources commercially if we are to sustain our economic growth, and diversify our economy,

which will include a shift from complete dependence on minerals and developing new sectors, such as agro-industry and tourism.

In order to achieve sustainable development, world peace and stability for our nations and peoples, joint and consensual endeavours are required, as well as greater cooperation and dialogue. The relevance of multilateralism has proved to be essential for our coordinated actions. Suriname recognizes the eminent role that the United Nations plays in ensuring lasting development and peace, and we pledge our unwavering commitment to the work of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Denis Moses, Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Moses (Trinidad and Tobago): I am honoured to have been given once again the opportunity to address the Assembly, which is composed of States that are tasked with charting the way forward on a range of issues that impact our collective development and well-being.

Allow me first to extend congratulations to the President of the General Assembly, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on his election to lead the Assembly at its seventy-first session. His election comes almost one year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which the international community committed to changing its approach to development to one that is people-centred, planet-focused, grounded in the principle of sustainability, and which endorses a balanced approach across the economic, political and social aspects of development. The election of a representative of a small island developing State to the presidency of this body is symbolic of the imperative for universal action and the contribution that must be made by all Members, regardless of size, economy, religion or demography, so as to ensure a trajectory of sustainable growth and development for humankind and life on earth.

Allow me to also express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark, who as President of the Assembly at its seventieth session further advanced the Office's high standard of transparency and accountability. Under his stewardship, notable progress was made towards the revitalization of the General Assembly, and its members fully identified the priorities for which action is deemed imperative to ensuring our common journey to 2030.

The scope of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covers the multitudinous threats to our collective well-being and the longevity of our civilization. From the existential hazard caused by unmitigated climate change to the insidious threats of violence, extremism and terrorism, to the crises of forced displacement and the spread of infectious diseases and illnesses, such as Ebola, chikungunya and zika, it is clear that the challenges of our time far exceed the limits of geography and demography and therefore diminish the efficacy of unilateral responses. However, as grave as the threats we collectively face, what is even more compelling is the opportunity presented to our United Nations to chart the course of meaningful and universal growth and prosperity by deepening our partnership and cooperation. Such an approach will allow for a reversal of the current patterns of inequality and insecurity and transform our collective circumstances into those that will redound to the benefit of all humanity.

The pathway to that transformation lies in the creation of meaningful and innovative partnerships to facilitate the full and universal implementation of the SDGs. The leadership imperative of our time requires that we strike an appropriate balance between national interest and the global good and, accordingly, that we adopt a deeply cooperative and constructive approach to carving out a future of prosperity for our and succeeding generations. I am therefore grateful for the opportunity to address the Assembly yet again and, in this general debate on the aptly selected theme, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", to share the perspectives of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, a small island developing State, as a responsible and committed partner in the multilateral pursuit of a sustainable future.

A little more than a year ago in this very Hall, Trinidad and Tobago joined other members in adopting the ambitious and inclusive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and thereby heralded a new phase of enhanced multilateralism in pursuit of a common goal. This groundbreaking Agenda, bolstered by a renewed spirit of global solidarity, compels each of us to join together in international cooperation and partnership to profoundly improve the lives of our fellow humans without discrimination or prejudice.

Having adopted the Agenda, we are all now tasked with determining the best way forward for its operationalization and implementation, according to our respective domestic circumstances. As evidence of its unreserved commitment to the achievement of the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda and the full implementation of the SDGs, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is placing the principles enshrined in the Agenda at the nucleus of its National Development Plan for Trinidad and Tobago, Vision 2030. Our Vision 2030 national plan, currently in the final stages of elaboration, aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals. Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that the 2030 Agenda is a transformative plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity through peace and partnership. Accordingly, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to its full implementation through the mainstreaming of the principles of sustainability throughout its policy spectrum.

The thrust of the 2030 Agenda for global transformation, with no one left behind, calls for action to enhance the quality of life of all segments of society, including the systematically marginalized groups. Among them are women, girls and the differently abled, who have historically been denied the equitable access to opportunity and mobility that would have ensured their participation in society as equal partners with men and enhanced not only their own quality of life and happiness, but also that of their families, communities and society as a whole. It is deeply regrettable that women and girls and the differently abled continue to be denied fundamental human rights and freedoms in many parts of the world. Women do not receive equal pay for equal work, and they are systematically prevented from obtaining an education and reaching their full potential as human beings and as citizens.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to raising the standard of living and welfare of all members of the national community, the enhancement of the educational system, improving the delivery of health care and providing a higher level of accessibility and support to persons with disabilities. That commitment has been a long-standing position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, which has enacted several laws, policies and other measures to promote and strengthen the role of women and girls in society and their overall contribution to national development.

One of the defining challenges of our time is that of addressing the issue of climate change and global temperature increase. Notwithstanding the minuscule contribution to absolute global carbon emissions of small island developing States such as Trinidad and Tobago, unmitigated climate change represents an existential threat for us. The future viability and existence of our island State is dependent on the urgency and ambitiousness of the global response to reversing the already unsustainable trend of the global temperature increase. Consequently, Trinidad and Tobago joins the international community in endorsing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as a sign of hope for the future. We especially wish to emphasize that the Agreement prioritizes the need for global action on the critical issue of climate change, an approach which, for us, is absolutely imperative if we are to have a chance of averting its most dangerous effects.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement signalled to the world that, in the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "the spirit of multilateralism is strong". That spirit must continue to see us through to early entry into force and implementation of the Agreement. In keeping with that sentiment, Trinidad and Tobago joined 174 other Member States in becoming a signatory of the Paris Agreement in April. Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that the conversation surrounding the Paris Agreement is now focused on building momentum towards its early entry into force. To that end, the Trinidad and Tobago Government is actively addressing the issue of ratification.

Trinidad and Tobago also looks forward to deliberations at the upcoming twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, and to working towards the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and supporting international cooperation on the mitigation, adaptation and compliance on a scale that will ensure that the increase in the average global temperature is limited to 1.5°C.

Although the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is largely dependent on the hydrocarbon and petrochemical industries, we are committed to the processes under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Accordingly, the Government has instituted incentives to encourage investment and job creation in renewable and clean technologies in the transportation and industrial sectors. The Government has aggressively pursued a national economic diversification strategy, a strategy which will also strengthen Trinidad and

Tobago's resilience to exogenous shocks in global markets. Trinidad and Tobago continues to explore innovative measures to bolster its economic stability and its capacity to remain properly integrated in the global financial and trade architecture.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment through international business activities and finance, international development cooperation and international trade. However, the issue of financial institutions terminating or restricting correspondent banking relations in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region has destabilized the financial sectors of our member States and has disrupted the region's growth and economic progress. The cessation of correspondent banking relations by international banks, despite CARICOM compliance with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Global Forum on Taxation, undermines our efforts to truly build a global partnership that will achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago therefore joins its partners in the Caribbean community in calling for international banks to engage in collaboration with affected member States to restore normal financial relationships between domestic banks and international markets.

The 2030 Agenda also recognizes that sustainable development can be realized only in a peaceful, secure and stable environment free of war and conflict. Transnational organized crime and violence, piracy, trafficking in persons, cybercrime and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons pose a daunting challenge to the security of all States, but especially small island developing States (SIDS). It is the experience of Trinidad and Tobago, as a small island developing State, and of the Caribbean Community as a whole, that those challenges undermine our efforts to achieve sustainable development, threatening the livelihoods of our people and the rule of law. Such threats can have the potential to affect regional and international peace and security.

Consequently, at the international level, Trinidad and Tobago, together with CARICOM, fully subscribes to the Arms Trade Treaty, with the aim of preventing armed violence in the region and freeing many from the deadly tyranny associated with a prevalence of unregulated small arms and light weapons. Since 2010, Trinidad and Tobago has also introduced and sponsored General Assembly resolution 68/33, on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, encouraging women's participation in all disarmament, non-proliferation and arms-control decision-making processes at the local, regional and national levels.

Ensuring the security, health and social development of our people continues to be a major priority for Trinidad and Tobago. Like many others, our country has not escaped the effects of the illicit drug trade and its associated ills. We have come to realize that in the context of sustainable development, our people's continued development cannot be divorced from the proliferation of that illicit trade and its concomitant problems. It is widely acknowledged that the world drug problem and the illicit drug economy have the ability to destabilize vulnerable States in many different ways. In order to deal with the problem, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is using its national development agenda to launch initiatives to mitigate the socioeconomic conditions that are both the cause and result of the problems related to drug use and trafficking. The initiatives are fully aligned with our overall policy direction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It seems fitting that I am addressing the Assembly on 26 September, the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Trinidad and Tobago would like to stress that using the nuclear option would have severe humanitarian and other devastating consequences for the peoples of the world. We therefore reiterate our call for denuclearizing every region of the world, and we are proud to belong to the region that enshrined the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone under the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Trinidad and Tobago believes firmly that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. We lament the fact that, 46 years after the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the international community is still unable to undertake good-faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Mutually assured destruction, which is inevitable with the use of nuclear weapons, cannot be a way of settling disputes when both the combatants and several hundred millions of people outside the theatre of war would assuredly

perish. Trinidad and Tobago therefore continues to firmly support the call for taking effective measures on nuclear disarmament, including commencing negotiations on an international instrument for prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons.

Trinidad and Tobago is deeply concerned about the growing number of violent extremist acts across the world and the threat that they pose to our shared values of democracy, peace, tolerance and respect for human dignity. While it is important to deal with violent extremism from a security perspective, we should not overlook or dismiss the correlation between violent extremism and development. We remain concerned about the global trend whereby young people fall victim to recruitment by extremist groups, through both online recruitment and other forms of proselytization. To address the problem, we share the view that in order to be as effective as possible, counter-terrorism strategies should include the creation of enabling environments that support the empowerment of young people. That inclusive approach can help to involve them in advocating for the goals of our collective aspirations, thereby reducing the allure of extremist groups.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to building an effective global framework for a strategic collective security architecture that addresses the negative social, economic and psychological conditions that give rise to violent extremism, including poverty, violations of human rights and weak governance. That framework must also be supported by a robust international legal system that enables everyone to live freely and in dignity, without fear of persecution, and that affords everyone equal protection before the law, in word and in fact. A robust framework of international law can protect all individuals from acts of violence, war crimes, crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity.

As a country that was in the vanguard of the efforts to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC), through the pioneering work of the late Arthur Robinson, former Prime Minister and President of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago remains resolute in its commitment to supporting the mandate of the ICC and its primary objective — helping to put an end to impunity for perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community and helping to prevent such heinous crimes. Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the importance and legitimacy of the ICC in promoting the rule of law, encouraging respect for human rights and achieving sustainable peace and the further development of nations, in accordance with international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. For those reasons, we urge those countries that have not yet submitted to the jurisdiction of the Court to do so sooner rather than later, so that it can appropriately and completely fulfil its mandate as a universal court.

Trinidad and Tobago is located in a region that is highly vulnerable to the current unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity and the impact of unsustainable practices on the marine environment, particularly in relation to activities conducted in marine ecosystems beyond areas of national jurisdiction. As such, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to the adoption, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), of an international legally binding instrument on the issue of conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We are of the view that a new implementing agreement under UNCLOS should lay a foundation for achieving sustainable development and the protection and sustainable management of the common heritage of humankind for the benefit of present and future generations.

On the occasion of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda last year (see A/70/PV.4), Trinidad and Tobago stated that one of the cornerstones of the integrated sustainable development agenda is the development of a multilateral system strategically poised to facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Partnerships undertaken by Governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and others provide a vehicle for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, financial resources and technology in order to support the efforts of developing countries to realize sustainable development.

However, middle-income developing countries continue to grapple with a situation that renders them ineligible for international development assistance by virtue of their status, while also coping with the vulnerabilities of being a small island developing State. That is indeed a problem when we consider that our country's middle-income status, based solely on per capita income, denies Trinidad and Tobago access to international development assistance that could bolster our efforts to accelerate our sustainable and social development. That is the common experience of the Caribbean Community, and indeed of the

majority of SIDS. We firmly believe that the United Nations development system should be driven by a multidimensional approach to development assistance that is better tailored to national priorities and specific needs.

If the States Members of the United Nations firmly believe that there can be no sustainable development without peace — and if we all have intentions to keep our promise that no one will be left behind — then the international community must find a solution to the protracted conflicts, tensions and humanitarian crises occurring across the world.

Trinidad and Tobago continues to be deeply concerned about the lack of credible progress in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people as well as those of Israel, our Government has consistently expressed its support for a negotiated settlement involving a two-State solution.

Trinidad and Tobago is also concerned about the ongoing border dispute between Guyana and Venezuela. Given that the two countries have historically maintained a friendly and cooperative relationship, we believe that they should both engage constructively in working towards a peaceful settlement, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

The international community is pleased that the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba is making progress. The memory of the first historical visit by a sitting United States President to Havana since the 1959 Cuban revolution will remain in the minds of the people of Cuba and the world for generations, and Trinidad and Tobago continues to be optimistic that the growing relationship between both countries will continue in good faith, and that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba, which significantly challenges its ability to achieve sustainable development, will be lifted soon.

Since the adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), not much has been done to move the process of reforming the Security Council forward. Trinidad and Tobago remains concerned about the fact that the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform have seen little progress since 2008. We therefore urge all Member States to work collaboratively, in the spirit of compromise and for the benefit of all States, to achieve reform of the Security Council so as to enable it to better address current realities, thereby improving the functioning and effectiveness of the United Nations.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I wish to express our deepest appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whose term as the eighth Secretary-General comes to a close at the end of this year. Mr. Ban has initiated many sweeping changes and reforms at the Secretariat designed to make the Organization an ever more dynamic body capable of responding to the emerging needs and challenges facing its diverse membership. At a time of escalating international terrorism and the increasingly urgent need for decisive action on climate change, as well as of criticisms of the efficacy of the United Nations and its peacekeeping operations, his outstanding efforts and leadership have been instrumental in shaping the future of multilateralism. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement are just two examples of an exceptional record of achievements, not to mention his groundbreaking initiative earlier this year to convene the first ever World Humanitarian Summit, in collaboration with the Government of Turkey, in the beautiful city of Istanbul.

Mr. Rahming (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As the United Nations continues its search for a successor, Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that the next Secretary-General must be held to the highest possible standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, with proven leadership and diplomatic skills. It is the responsibility of the next Secretary-General to help realize the extraordinary expectations embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals, to address the burgeoning challenges of the forced migration of refugees and violent extremism, and to transform the United Nations into a global institution that is effective, relevant and fit for purpose.

The universal push to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and transform our world is the responsibility of every State Member of the United Nations. In that regard, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its commitment to the Charter and its principles. We will continue to work closely with our family of nations in the pursuit of international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development for every single human being. While we may look different, speak different languages and face different challenges,

humankind shares a common beginning and a common future. In the words of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan,

> "beneath the surface of States and nations, ideas and language, lies the fate of individual human beings in need. Answering their needs will be the mission of the United Nations in the century to come".

Together, let our answer resonate for generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Augustine Philip Mahiga, Minister for Foreign Affairs, East Africa, Regional and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): First and foremost, I would like to convey to the Assembly greetings from Mr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who, owing to pressing engagements at home, including dealing with the aftermath of the recent devastating earthquake in north-western Tanzania, could not attend today's meeting. He reaffirms Tanzania's commitment to the United Nations and its ideals, and wishes the Assembly success in its deliberations.

On behalf of the people and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. My delegation wishes him and his team a successful tenure as they preside over our collective global agenda. Tanzania pledges its support and cooperation to him in discharging his duties and responsibilities. We would also like to commend his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the Assembly at its seventieth session, for his tireless efforts in sustaining momentum for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I would like to assure the Assembly of Tanzania's continued support to our shared commitment to addressing the myriad challenges facing the world, including, but not limited to, poverty, injustice, climate change and violent extremism. The United Republic of Tanzania is counting on the leadership of the President in mobilizing the world to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Now that the framework for the global indicators is in place, the onus is on us to ensure effective implementation of the Agenda. We welcome the theme that the Member States adopted for this session of the Assembly — "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". We recognize that it is an ambitious agenda and that much is at stake. We know that national efforts must be stepped up if we are to make the Agenda implementable.

We in Tanzania have integrated the SDGs into our national development plans and strategies, and in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, we have taken various steps to ensure effective implementation at the national level. Our second national five-year development plan, launched in June, whose theme is "Nurturing industrialization for economic transformation and human development", as well as our new 2016-2020 poverty reduction strategy for Zanzibar, are informed by the outcomes of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. They are the basic frameworks in our efforts to improve the welfare of Tanzanians and ensure that no one is left behind.

In spite of our national efforts, and a significant drive to mobilize domestic resources for implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, we have learned that on our own we cannot realize those ambitious goals in a timely manner. Individual and collective efforts at the local, national and international levels are imperative. We have an international and regional obligation to discharge our commitments in keeping with Goal 17 of the SDGs, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Gender equality and women's empowerment, as fundamental human rights, have now become an acceptable and enduring theme in humankind's pursuit of equality and justice, a scale for measuring social progress and an important goal in realizing sustainable development. Women's political and economic participation in leadership roles and decision-making strengthens democracy and equality and gives vigour to the economy. That is the essence of Goal 5.

Moreover, while women's empowerment and full participation in society are important goals in themselves, they are vital to reducing poverty, achieving universal education, improving maternal and child health and fulfilling other development goals. Economic development is also a strategic tool for expanding women's political participation and leadership. Without a capacity to generate their own

incomes, women face considerable barriers to reaching higher levels of education and obtaining health care and the autonomy needed to participate in politics. Collectively and universally, they represent more than half of the human resources and potential skills and talents available to humankind in our societies.

Tanzania is committed to promoting women's empowerment at all levels. We are striving to bring more women into the formal sector through capacity-building programmes and advocacy. We have removed discriminatory laws and policies with the aim of empowering women, including by reforming our land laws to entitle all to inheritance and equal access to land. Tanzania has continued to act to improve women's representation in decision-making bodies. The 2010 general elections saw 126 women elected, and by 2015 that number had increased to 142, amounting to 36.9 per cent of all parliamentarians in the country. It was during the 2015 elections that President Magufuli chose the first-ever female Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who also happens to be the person participating in the United Nations initiative for the empowerment of women. That reaffirms my country's determination to see more women in key decision-making positions and to continue scaling up such initiatives to empower women in Tanzania. The process is also increasingly owned by women themselves.

Goal 16 of the SDGs recognizes that corruption undermines efforts to combat poverty and gender inequality. It denies access and acts as a tax on poor families in their access to their rights to public services. That is why the Government of Tanzania has waged a war on corruption by mainstreaming transparency, accountability and effectiveness in the delivery of services by public institutions. We have instituted mechanisms to promote ethical standards and ensure that those holding public office recognize that their primary responsibility is to provide quality and timely service to the public. We have complemented those efforts by enhancing public awareness of the evils of corruption. But national efforts to curb corruption cannot yield sustainable results without support from the international community. Developed countries must hold their investors and multinational companies accountable by ensuring that they pay the taxes they owe. In order to contribute to financing our development, they must also be ready to return the assets and funds that some unscrupulous leaders and individuals steal from developing countries and hide in overseas accounts.

We all know that young people are very important to a nation's development. They are not only the leaders of tomorrow, they are also the partners of today. Ignoring them can lead to catastrophe, as they are easily lured into harmful activities that are detrimental to society, such as drug trafficking and joining radical extremist groups and terrorist cells. Since young people form a large percentage of our population, we are taking measures to empower that crucial group, which we believe will champion our efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To that end, we have established a youth development fund that by March of this year had already lent a total of 1.6 billion Tanzanian shillings to 284 youth groups. We therefore call on our development partners to complement our efforts in the same cause.

One of the priorities of the Government of Tanzania is achieving inclusive and quality education for all. We believe that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for attaining sustainable development, and we are working tirelessly to ensure that all girls and boys receive a free primary and secondary education. The Government has reformed its curriculum to improve its provision of a quality education capable of addressing the needs of the twenty-first century. In addition, we are directing our education policy and strategy in order to reach specific vulnerable and marginalized populations, including girls, women and those with disabilities.

When he took office, President Magafuli made primary and secondary education free for all children. The Government has set aside more than 263 billion Tanzanian shillings to cover the full cost of guaranteeing free primary and secondary education for all, thereby demonstrating its commitment to providing free, quality education to the people. The objective is to ensure that we meet target 4.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which requires States to ensure that "all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education".

Climate change is poised to undermine national efforts to reduce poverty. The losses of human, natural, financial, social and physical capital caused by the adverse effects of climate change are of great concern to Tanzania as it strives to attain sustainable development. That is why we have made climate-change adaptation a

national priority. Based on the effects of climate change, we have prepared a national adaptation programme of action and subsequent national adaptation plans for Tanzania, aimed at identifying immediate and long-term actions for addressing climate change through our national climate-change strategy.

It is our hope that the Green Climate Fund and other funds will provide the financial resources needed to address adaptation requirements, as their unavailability limits the delivery of national obligations. Our modest estimates show that we need approximately $500 million annually to address the already vivid impacts of climate change. It is therefore important for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to enhance efforts to address barriers to financial resources from such funds. That will allow developing countries, particularly those that are least developed, to access the necessary resources urgently and without conditionality.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was truly historic. At the time of ratifying the Agreement, Tanzania submitted its intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) on both adaptation and mitigation under the Paris Agreement, and was among the first countries to do so. That was a demonstration of our firm commitment to fulfilling our obligations on the protection of the planet and humankind in general. Our INDCs cover both adaptation and mitigation in the context of our national development vision. With over 48 million hectares of forested land, which is more than 54 per cent of our land mass, Tanzania is already making a great contribution to the global community in terms of carbon sink. However, it concerns us that our nationally determined contributions as a global community are not adding up to the collective numbers that will make the world safe for humankind. Those countries with more responsibility and capacity must take the lead by reducing their emissions, since otherwise the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will have very limited effect, if any at all.

Tanzania has not been spared by the world drug problem. Illicit drugs trafficked from other regions are crossing our borders, and some of them remain in our communities. During his inaugural speech at the current session of Parliament, my President made a strong commitment to fighting illicit drug dealers and traffickers. In addressing the issue of international criminality, bringing major dealers to justice will be among the priorities on his agenda. In the clear knowledge that corruption is a barrier to fighting this menace, we are determined to tackle both evils concurrently. Our resolve will remain unshaken, and the Government will continue to strengthen control over the trade in and use of drugs. We need international cooperation in fighting these international crimes.

The horrific terrorist attacks in 1998 on the American Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam is a tragedy our people cannot forget. The increasing speed with which attacks by terrorists and other radical groups have spread around the world has caused the loss of life of thousands of innocent people and the destruction of property. Such acts continue to undermine national, regional and global efforts to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. Tanzania is cooperating with the international community to address this global threat and has taken several practical steps, including enacting the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002, the Prevention of Terrorism Regulations of 2014, the Money Laundering Act of 2006 and the Amendment to Money Laundering Regulations of 2013. A Financial Intelligence Unit in the Ministry of Finance has also been put in place to combat the financing of terrorism. Furthermore, the Government has established a national counter-terrorism strategy, which coordinates the counter-terrorism efforts of our agencies. It is becoming increasingly evident that Tanzania, and East Africa as a whole, form part of the global terrorist agenda and strategy.

While strengthening our legal framework and capacities to confront this menace, we continue to enhance international cooperation in dealing with terrorism. If we do not take stern measures now, we risk denying our achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. International terrorism has a grand strategy that intends to envelop and shackle not only East Africa but West Africa and North Africa too, before marching towards Southern Africa. This is a serious threat that must be collectively acknowledged and tackled by the international community.

On the subject of regional conflicts in Africa, Tanzania is concerned about the ongoing conflict in Burundi and its impact, including loss of life, damage to property and the displacement of persons. Tanazania has been one of the host countries for the refugees that flee Burundi sporadically. It is currently hosting more than 165 Burundian refugees who left because of the most recent conflict.

The East African Community member States are working hard to ensure the return of peace to Burundi. We believe that, under the able leadership of His Excellency Mr. Kaguta Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, as a mediator and His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, former President of Tanzania, as a facilitator, the peace process, which is now back on track, will regain its former vigour so that it becomes as inclusive as possible and succeeds sooner rather than later.

Tanzania joins the international community in condemning the recent resumption of conflict in South Sudan. The situation has derailed the progress we had made towards settlement of the conflict and the reunification of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, in which Tanzania and South Africa played a significant role. We call upon the parties to the conflict in South Sudan to continue working together in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led efforts to bring about peace. We hope the positive effects of the August 2015 IGAD peace agreement will continue to prevail and enable the peace process to move forward swiftly and successfully.

As the current Chair of the East African Community, Tanzania convened an Extraordinary Summit earlier this month to address the ongoing political impasse and security crises in both Burundi and South Sudan. It is my hope that both countries will put their national interests, particularly those of their people, first and end the conflicts. We invite the international community to take an interest in these issues, while leaving leadership to the East African Community. These conflicts must continue to be of concern not only to Africa but to the rest of the world, as they impact upon international peace and security.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have adopted numerous resolutions on Palestine and Western Sahara that demand attention and action. The non-implementation of these decisions erodes the credibility of the Organization. As States Members of the United Nations, we must ensure that we put into practice that which we deliberate and agree upon.

Unilateral sanctions and embargoes imposed on countries are a hindrance to development and affect innocent civilians. While we welcome the resumption of bilateral relations between the United States and Cuba, we continue to reiterate our position in favour of the total elimination of embargoes for the betterment of the peoples of both countries. The early lifting of sanctions and embargoes will strengthen relations for the mutual benefit of both parties, the United States and Cuba.

We are currently witnessing a new process for selecting the next Secretary-General. We welcome the hearings of the General Assembly on all aspirants. The process has shown that it is possible for the new Secretary-General to be selected transparently and democratically by all Member States. Furthermore, my delegation is of the view that the Security Council should submit more than one name to the General Assembly for voting. In addition, Tanzania wishes to reaffirm the decision of the African Union Summit during its twenty-seventh ordinary session, held in July, that the selection of the Secretary-General should respect the principle of geographical rotation and take into account gender balance. The selection of the Secretary-General in 2016 will send a clear signal that the permanent members of the Security Council are also ready and willing to embark upon a reform of the Security Council. That process will enhance the credibility of the United Nations and begin the long-overdue reforms of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In conclusion, Tanzania wishes to pay particular tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his team, who will be ending their tenure at the end of 2016. Under the stewardship of Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who led the Organization by example, we have been able to address in all honesty global issues ranging from climate change to development and peace and security. If other issues have lagged behind, he has at least put them on the agenda of the United Nations. We look forward to the new Secretary-General picking up where Ban Ki-moon leaves off.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Valentin Rybakov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): A year ago, world leaders gave the green light to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The document is now our common guide for the next 15 years. In the history of the Organization, there have been similar grand initiatives. Unfortunately, some of them have remained confined to paper, such as the idea 40 years ago of establishing a new world economic order. I very much hope that a similar fate does not befall the current Agenda. Yet such fears do exist. The main problem is

that the world lacks systemic stability, which means that there is no confidence in what will come tomorrow, and there is no confidence that the world is evolving in accordance with rational order and common sense. Wars, conflicts and increasing transnational challenges give rise to a feeling of chaos, a chaos that exists side by side with unprecedented interconnectedness and scientific and technological progress. In other words, we are living in conditions of contradictory realities.

How has chaos become a serious contender with positive a globalization progress? I think there are three answers to that question — political, economic and social. From a political point of view, problems have arisen because the so-called winners of the Cold War did not want to integrate the losers into their system. Furthermore, as was the case with the First World War, the victors tried to impose their will on the vanquished and to unilaterally carry out sweeping global changes that affected everyone, not just themselves. That attempt was unsuccessful. It could not have been otherwise. It is probably true that history does teach us something here. The consequences of that attempt were terrible — the destruction of States, festering conflicts, mega-terrorism, large movements of people in the form of migration. As a result, in terms of politics, the world is now in a period of transition. However, we do not know what we are moving towards.

We must also consider the economic factor. In that context, there has always been a conflict between the State and the market — at least since the time of the Industrial Revolution. Balanced and healthy competition is unquestionably useful for economic progress and reducing poverty and inequality. However, in recent decades the balance has been disturbed. The market has gained the upper hand and the State has been relegated to second place. That has happened because it was the objective pursued by so-called corporate capital, which has dominated life in leading developed countries. And what has that free market given us? The minority — the true advocate of corporate capital — has achieved even greater wealth. For everybody else corporate capital has meant nothing but suffering and problems.

It is also important that the market has seriously exacerbated the environmental challenges that the world faces. The market is not concerned with anything except profit. What does the market care about the environment?

Problems of a social nature are probably not so obvious to the general public. At the same time, they are no less serious and no less dangerous than the challenges we face in the political and economic spheres. We are seeing growing social and cultural gaps in the world, and problems of identity loom large. As a result we are spending more and more time arguing about essentially spiritual matters. Without question, there are understandable reasons for the advent of a counterculture in various countries half a century ago. There is also an explanation for how that phenomenon has changed social relations in the West, particularly in the areas of morals, moral values and the family. However, there is something that makes no sense and that is why such changes should affect the rest of the world. Why should those who have accepted the changes impose them on others whose historical contexts were different and whose societies therefore had no reason to adopt similar changes?

Understanding the reasons for the advent of an unstable world that is full of contradictions is certainly important. That is the first step towards action. Therefore, what do we have to do to change the negative global context? In political terms, we have to have a clear understanding of where we want to go from the current period of transition. What is the new world order that we are endeavouring to create? Of course, that is easier said than done. In that context, I cannot help but quote the outstanding thinker Immanuel Kant who said that

> "building a just and peaceful international system is the most difficult of all tasks and a perfect solution is impossible".

We all have ideas about how to change the world, but those ideas are different and we will all have to sacrifice something if we want to enact a change for the better. The result will reflect the lowest common denominator, but that is inevitable. I am not going to try to predict what the reality of this new world order will be in terms of its form and content. I would just like to focus attention on three principles that we think are essential to building that world order.

First, the new system should be State-driven. States remain, as they have been, the main players in international life. Where States are non-existent or weak, anarchy, chaos and violence reign. Secondly, the new world order should be inclusive. That means that all States, without exception, should have a voice — a real

voice, not just one for the sake of appearances. Thirdly, I am deeply convinced that the new system cannot be imposed; it needs to be cultivated. Only then would it be considered fair by both politicians and ordinary people.

In terms of the economy, we have been seeing positive trends, notably in connection with the re-establishment of a balance between the State and the market. The financial and economic crisis of the past decade demonstrated the failure of free-market ideas. As a result, around the world we have been seeing the re-establishment and strengthening of the State role in economic affairs. It is important for that trend to continue. Belarus has in the past consistently been committed to the idea of a strong State, especially in economic matters, and we plan to continue that policy in the future. It is the will of the Belarusian people, which was clearly expressed in June at the Belarusian People's Assembly.

In the context of economics, another important trend is towards regional integration. To some extent, regional blocs have begun to play an independent role — one which until recently had been the prerogative of States. Since that seems to be the trend, there is a pressing need to establish cooperation mechanisms for regional processes similar to those we have established for States. Belarus holds that theme very close to heart. Belarus, as an active participant in a number of regional integration processes, remains very committed thereto. We have a vested interest in strengthening those processes and are deeply convinced that cooperation with other regional initiatives will facilitate that task. Our approach could be summed up as "integrating integration". To assist in implementing that concept, we shall soon convene a conference on this issue in Minsk, with the support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Finally, on the need for action in social and cultural areas, let us begin with a very simple fact. We are all different as a result of a host of different factors — geography, climate, wars, epidemics, religions and many others. Those factors have made us who we are. Tradition and culture cannot be changed. They have the power to unite. In a given territory they unite the people who died there, the people who are living there now and the people who have not yet been born. It is therefore obvious that imposing our preferences on each other is a mistaken and pointless endeavour.

What we need in this situation is dialogue, both dialogue to understand one another and dialogue that is a goal in itself. Dialogue should be an ongoing process that helps to find common ground among the different social and cultural approaches and that yields a positive result.

Let us consider the concept of the family as an example. We in Belarus are committed to the values of a traditional family, while in other countries there may be a recognition of a variety of types of family. We think that the individual is part of a family. Others, however, may assume that the family belongs to the individual. We do not need to demonstrate to each other the rightness of our particular approach. Instead, we should understand why we hold different positions. Can our different approaches lead to some kind of positive result? I think they can.

The Republic of Belarus sees an opportunity for addressing such approaches at the meeting of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs scheduled for March 2017, at which a draft resolution will be proposed on the role of the family in preventing illicit drug trafficking. We all have an interest in an effective fight against that challenge. We need to think together about how the family may be able to help in that area, despite the fact that we may understand the concept of family differently.

If Member States really want to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they need to restore world stability and overcome the growing chaos. I am convinced that this is possible, and that the United Nations, with its wealth of expertise, has the potential to help States in that endeavour. In any case, it is important that the United Nations work on practical implementation of the Agenda rather than immerse itself in the usual optimization, synchronization and report-writing. It is important to recognize that the Secretariat has not always worked in harmony with Member States. We hope that situation will change for the better under the new Head of our Organization.

The new Agenda for the United Nations, like the current global context, poses significant challenges for us. Looking at the prospects for their implementation, I call on everyone to be guided by the words of the second Secretary-General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, who said,

> "Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was."

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Caleb Otto, chair of the delegation of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Otto (Palau): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., the President of the Republic of Palau, I have the honour to make the following remarks at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

At the outset, Palau would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his election to lead our work at the seventy-first session. We are confident that he will rise to the many challenges and make the Pacific islands proud. We pledge him our support. We also wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his sterling leadership during the past year. His presidency will be known for championing participation and transparency.

We join other Pacific nations in extending our heartiest congratulations to Fiji on bringing home to the Pacific islands from Rio de Janeiro the first-ever Olympic gold medal. We would also like to take this opportunity to commend and thank the people of Brazil for successfully hosting the thirty-first Olympiad. Palau believes in the power of sport as an important enabler of sustainable development, and we contributed to the idea of sport being included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as expressed in paragraph 37 of that document. The power of sport to uplift the human spirit was demonstrated when a team composed of refugees was allowed to compete in the Olympic Games in Rio. We congratulate the refugee team, Brazil and sport for walking the talk about inclusiveness.

A year ago, as we began our address to the General Assembly (see A/70/PV.28), we stated that we lived in perilously challenging yet still hopeful times. As we meet today, the perils of climate change and global conflicts still exist. Other challenges, such as those posed by the flow of migrants and refugees, as well as by terrorism and violent extremism, have become more prominent, bringing with them psychosocial damage and despair. Addressing antimicrobial resistance and nuclear testing issues have also become matters of urgency.

Amid those challenges we still have bases for holding onto hope. The high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, held recently, gave us an opportunity to explore ways to address the issue, and we eagerly await the report from that meeting.

We commend Ambassador Gómez Camacho of Mexico for his excellent work on the Political Declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on antimicrobial resistance (resolution 71/3). We trust that the Declaration will galvanize much-needed action throughout United Nations agencies and on the ground in all States Members of the United Nations.

Palau joins the family of nations condemning the nuclear testing conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are concerned with the peace and long-term stability of the Pacific region. The proximity of Palau to the launching site places us at particular risk. In addition, we call on Member States that have not yet ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to do so in order for us to move one step closer to total nuclear disarmament.

The impact of climate change in terms of sea-level rise, ocean acidification and the frequency and intensity of storms continues to pose an existential threat to Palau and other small island developing States. Palau participated actively in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change processes and was one of the countries that strongly advocated for making Goal 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a stand-alone goal on climate change. Palau is proud to have been the second, following Fiji, of the 60 nations to have ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, bringing the total number of ratifications to approximately 48 per cent of the membership, with 55 per cent of Member States required for the Agreement to enter into force. We are encouraged by the 130 nations that have signed the Agreement and are confident that by end of the year the Agreement will begin to work for all of us.

In addition, we are hopeful that a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for climate change and security will be appointed. Such an appointment will provide an effective working link between the Secretary-General, the General Assembly and the Security Council on matters dealing with peace and security arising from climate change.

It is imperative that no effort be spared to ensure that global temperature rise remains under 1.5°C. Furthermore, access to financial and technological resources must be made available to small island developing States and all those who need it most.

Fourteen years is a short period within which to achieve the 17 goals of 2030 Agenda, which is why we agree with the sense of urgency expressed in the word "push" in the theme for the seventy-first session of the United Nations: "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". There is an urgent need to transform our world in the face of severe climate change impacts, global conflicts resulting in the unprecedented migration of refugees and poverty exacerbated by huge gaps in resource use and ownership. There is a need to push — either to jump-start or go further than we have gone already. A push is indeed necessary as we have already lost a year of implementation.

In Palau we are in the process of integrating the 17 Goals into our national and sectoral plans so that we can implement the 2030 Agenda in a holistic manner. As part of that effort, we have taken an initiative that for us represents a concrete path towards achievement of the SDGs: the National Marine Sanctuary, which we began to implement in 2015.

The National Marine Sanctuary sets aside as a no-take zone 80 per cent of our total exclusive economic zone — an area of over half a million square kilometres of our ocean. The Palau National Marine Sanctuary is an initiative based on a traditional practice of conservation called *Bul*, which imposes a moratorium on the exploitation of diminishing resources in order to allow them to replenish themselves. The National Marine Sanctuary will therefore allow our ocean to regain its health, replenish its fish stocks and make progress in the rejuvenation of the biodiversity within it. By strengthening the ocean-based activities of diving, snorkeling, kayaking, swimming and catch-and-release sport fishing, the Sanctuary will boost Palau tourism, which is the main engine of our economy. More important, it will allow us to pass on a healthy ocean and its heritage to our children and the generations to follow.

In addition to facilitating the achievement of Goals 13 and 14, the increased income from tourism will allow us to provide basic services, such water and sanitation, and to ensure food security. It will allow us to address the other Goals, including the eradication of extreme poverty, the improvement of health, including addressing the predominance of non-communicable diseases, the strengthening of education, building stronger community resilience and improved information and communication technology to facilitate stronger and more effective disaster resilience. We will also be able to address the special needs of children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, including those with mental illnesses. One of the important outcomes we want from the 2030 Agenda is the promotion of the mental health and well-being for all citizens of Palau.

The success of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary will depend to a great extent upon what happens in the areas beyond national jurisdiction, since fish stocks and the health of biodiversity do not have specific boundaries. Palau is therefore grateful that, in accordance with resolution 69/292, a new implementing agreement is under consideration through Preparatory Committee negotiations designed to come up with a comprehensive global regime to better address the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are hopeful that the two Preparatory Committees will continue to make positive progress towards a strong implementing agreement. It would contribute greatly to the successful achievement of the objectives of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary.

Genuine and durable partnerships are also critical to the success of the Sanctuary initiative. Conducting the monitoring and surveillance of such a vast area is very challenging when we are so constrained in our financial, technological and human resources. This underpins the importance of Goal 17 and the significance of genuine and durable partnerships so strongly advocated for in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action, also known as the Samoa Pathway. In that context, we also wish to recommend that all of us consider partnering with God in our work: He is the only faithful, genuine and durable partner.

Palau has been fortunate to have many friends and development partners that have assisted us in our National Marine Sanctuary initiative, our renewable energy efforts and our sustainable development activities. In that regard, we wish to acknowledge with gratitude the strong partnerships that we have enjoyed with the United States of America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, Italy, India and Taiwan. We are especially grateful for the assistance they have already given us for the Marine Sanctuary, on climate change and in other areas of development.

The Republic of China — Taiwan — provided assistance that helped us to achieve our Millennium

Development Goals, and we look forward to continued support from it towards our achievement of the 2030 Agenda. We urge the United Nations system to involve Taiwan in the processes for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We will need all the resources we can garner, and it will require the participation of every global citizen to have the push we need to be successful. The mantra "no one left behind" must refer not only to benefits, but also to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Agenda was universal in its development and is universal in its transformational goals. It must also be universal in its implementation. Finally, Taiwan possesses technical capacity in many areas which can be shared with the world. It should therefore participate in international meetings, mechanisms and frameworks, such as the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and various economic partnerships, inter alia.

When we talk about participating in and benefiting from the 2030 Agenda, we think of enablers of achievement. Accordingly, in addition to applauding the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, we would advocate for lifting the embargo so Cuba can have the resources it requires to meet its developmental goals. In addition, we join others in advocating for an amenable resolution to the problem in West Papua through meaningful and constructive dialogue.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not express, on behalf of Palau, our profound appreciation for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He is the first Secretary-General to visit the Pacific, and he never wavered in his desire to ensure that the existential threats to the most vulnerable small island developing States were addressed. Under his stewardship, among other things, we achieved the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We wish him and his family well in their future endeavours.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon often said,

> "We are the first generation that can end poverty and the last that can end climate change."

We agree and salute him for the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, which, if implemented effectively, will help end poverty and climate change, respectively. Our resolve to leave no one behind should be about those who need help and about those who can offer help. Addressing climate change and achieving the 2030 Agenda requires political will, resolve, commitment of resources and goodwill. There is no room for political barriers.

I am reminded of what the Secretary-General said in his statement at the opening of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. On the topic of barriers, he said,

> "Far too often, I have seen widely supported proposals blocked ... by a few or sometimes even just one country ... Time and again, I have seen essential action and good ideas blocked ...
>
> "Is it fair, in this complicated twenty-first century, for any one country, or a few countries, to yield such disproportionate power and hold the world hostage on so many important issues?
>
> "The global public is right to ask whether this is how an Organization in which we have invested so much hope and so many aspirations should function". (*A/71/PV.8, pp. 3-4*).

In that vein, Palau supports Security Council reform, including expansion of the permanent membership to include two seats for Africa and one seat for small island developing States. Our generation will either rise to meet the challenges or be condemned to face regrets from future generations. We can make the choice. Palau has shown the choice it has already made.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Marie-Louise Potter, Head of the Delegation of Seychelles.

Ms. Potter (Seychelles): Allow me to add Seychelles' voice to those who have congratulated Ambassador Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I also thank Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his commitment and strong leadership as the President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

Humankind finds itself on the cusp of achieving the immeasurable in terms of making a true difference to all peoples of the world. As we embark upon this new collaborative journey, our sustained momentum could be a catalyst for positive change. We need an institution that is not afraid of change and is able to address the challenges of the twenty-first century. Such terms as

inclusiveness, compromise and equality should resonate throughout the Organization. On this note, allow me to reiterate Seychelles' calls for fair reform within this Hall, while renewing our commitment to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

The chosen theme for this year's Assembly, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", reminds us of the urgency of the present moment. Within the context of change and transformation, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) played a significant and crucial role, which was to herald a much-needed call for nations to improve the livelihoods of society's weak and marginalized by addressing poverty in its many forms, while also promoting human rights and environmental sustainability.

Seychelles is proud to have achieved most of the targets set out in the MDGs and remains eager to fulfil its responsibility to sustain the momentum in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yes, we recognize that progress has been made both nationally and internationally, but we also recognize that much still needs to be done.

In Seychelles that recognition is reflected by our push to integrate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063 into our national development strategy. However, I believe that the path to transformation is not one that can be travelled alone. SDG 17, which focuses on global partnership for sustainable development, reaffirms this point.

For real change to occur, the world will need to stand together in ensuring that strong action is backed by the adequate financial support that is needed for overall achievement of the Goals, including giving due consideration to the special conditions that small States and small island developing States are faced with. The implementation of a vulnerability index in development frameworks would enable a fairer measurement of economies and serve as a more appropriate reference tool for financial support than the traditionally emphasized per capita gross domestic product.

Goal 14 in particular plays a pertinent role in our peoples' lives. The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development has become pivotal to the survival of small-island economies.

As a champion of the Blue Economy initiative, which is directed at reinforcing marine-related activities for sustainability purposes, Seychelles recognizes that our oceans present an abundance of untapped opportunities for sustained growth. It is therefore imperative to highlight that the Blue Economy concept and SDG 14 are synonymous with the global action to harness the power of the oceans as a tool for transformation. It is important in this endeavour that we shift the paradigm and view the world in innovative ways. In relation to the Blue Economy, the "blue bonds" initiative and the debt-swap agreement serve as tangible examples of Seychelles' contribution to the debate.

One of the elements underpinning the Blue Economy approach is action to address climate change. Because Seychelles is an island nation heavily dependent upon the environment for its survival, climate change and its adverse effects occupy a permanent place in the minds of our people. We are exposed to its devastating consequences not as mere bystanders, but through first-hand experience, which affects our families and threatens our livelihoods. Addressing the impacts of climate change is therefore an essential part of the discussion, as it involves the very future of our country. With this in mind, Seychelles is compelled to put itself at the forefront of the fight against climate change, for it is a battle that we cannot afford to lose. In this vein, the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which Seychelles was among the first 20 States to ratify, has been an encouraging sign of the international community's renewed political will to push for positive change.

The security of our oceans forms yet another integral part of the drive towards human progress. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing imperils this progress not only by endangering our marine ecosystems, but also by harming food security and jeopardizing the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. Seychelles therefore renews its commitment to ensuring that such violations do not go unanswered. Furthermore, although we have seen tremendous gains in the long battle fought against piracy, we need to remain vigilant and strengthen our own efforts to reduce piracy-related activities in our oceans. To that end, the work undertaken through such initiatives as the Contact Group for Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, which Seychelles currently chairs, is essential for our continued success.

Seychelles fully supports all international efforts aimed at seeking a diplomatic and political solution to the ongoing crisis in Syria, which continues to rage at the expense of the innocent. We deeply hope that a solution is found to further contribute to mitigating the spread of extremism and ideologies of hate, which continues to wreak devastating consequences on various countries throughout the world.

The World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey and the recent high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants hosted by the President of the General Assembly serve to highlight the scale of the challenges facing the global community. Such challenges also solicit deeper reflection on the plight of the more than 60 million people in the world who are displaced as a result of conflicts and natural disasters linked to climate change. Seychelles calls upon the international community for renewed collaboration among States and stronger moral resolve, as together we endeavour to address the global humanitarian crisis that is weighing heavily on the heart of humankind.

Seychelles welcomes the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, and we reiterate our hope to see an end to the painful economic embargo on a sister island nation.

Lastly, I wish to take this opportunity to express our utmost appreciation for the dynamism, hard work and devotion of our outgoing Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during his term in office. He leaves behind a strong legacy of determination to create a more peaceful and equal future for the world. Furthermore, his championing of the cause of small islands will remain engraved in our collective memory. We are certain that his contributions to improving society will continue to have positive repercussions and that the new Secretary-General will follow in his righteous path.

In conclusion, I am hopeful for the future we believe in and that the inherent goodness of humankind will lead us to do what is right. At this critical time we have a shared responsibility to cast aside our differences and focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. I hope that together we can commence our universal push to transform our world, not only for ourselves but for generations to come.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ib Petersen, Chair of the Delegation of Denmark.

Mr. Petersen (Denmark): At the outset, Denmark wishes to warmly welcome and congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji. It was an honour for Denmark to assume the presidency of the Assembly at its seventieth session, and we thank His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his excellent work. We wish President Thomson every success in leading our crucial work in the year ahead.

We live in volatile times. It is therefore up to all of us to strengthen international cooperation and make it more effective. We must do so in order to foster a peaceful, sustainable and rights-based international society built on the ambitious common goals that we have adopted this fall.

While the challenges facing the United Nations today may seem daunting, our recent record does give cause for optimism. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the successful conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as well as the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, have demonstrated our ability to come together to address today's global challenges. However, our task now is to turn our shared agenda into real change that will benefit people around the world. With a new Secretary-General coming into office, this will be a pivotal year for the United Nations.

Denmark has always believed that global challenges must be addressed through effective collective efforts, with a sharp focus on the rights and freedoms of the individual human being. Denmark has a vision for action that is based on three core elements — dignity, development and dialogue. Those elements characterize our approach to the work of the United Nations and will guide our candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the 2019-2021 term.

Around the world, many people are denied a life of dignity. Armed conflicts and violent extremism have led to human rights abuses and violations in several parts of the world. Syria, Iraq and the Sahel region are experiencing some of the most serious and urgent crises facing us today. In many other places, violence and instability are causing immeasurable human suffering. Millions of people are subject to oppression, slavery and trafficking by the dark forces of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other extremist groups, which requires a strong and determined collective response.

In Mali, Denmark actively contributes to the promotion of peace and stability. We donate to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and are engaged in long-term development cooperation with the country. In Syria and Iraq, Denmark contributes significantly to the fight against ISIL, including through support for local communities in the aftermath of conflict. We must ensure that military achievements against ISIL are followed up with determined and coordinated efforts to sustain peace. Without such efforts, we will not succeed. This autumn, Denmark will launch a new three-year regional stabilization programme for Syria and Iraq. The main focus will be to support immediate stabilization efforts in areas of Iraq that have been liberated from ISIL.

Our common security also depends on nations adhering to the norms and rules laid out by the United Nations, whether in the General Assembly, the Security Council or other organs and agencies. All countries must abide by their obligations under international law, including on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In that regard, Denmark condemns the recent nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and urges the international community to respond in a strong and unified manner.

In the past week the world came together to address the mounting challenge of millions of people forced to flee from their homes due to armed conflict, natural disasters or poverty. A staggering 65 million people were displaced in 2015, requiring a determined and effective response from the United Nations. Denmark welcomes the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), adopted last week, which underlinines the principle of shared responsibility and the importance of addressing the fundamental causes of migration. Denmark is among the largest per capita humanitarian donors in the world, and we will continue to do our part. Poverty and a lack of opportunity are among the underlying factors leading to conflict and instability; they are also key factors in driving people from their homes.

Delivery on sustainable development and the eradication of extreme poverty are vital avenues towards a free, peaceful, prosperous world and in addressing the fundamental causes of migration. Denmark's development cooperation is a concrete testament to our commitment to the United Nations and to assisting the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Since 1978 — for almost four decades — Denmark has been meeting the target of providing 0.7 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance. We strongly urge many more countries to meet the same goal.

A pre-eminent challenge on the path to sustainable development is climate change. We must all take up the challenge of turning the commitments set forth in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change into action, to bring about immense and positive change for the planet and for people. All of those present in this Hall can count on Denmark to be at the forefront in that endeavour — in terms of follow-up both at home and internationally. The Danish Government will put forward a motion for ratification of the Paris Agreement in the Danish Parliament on 5 October.

The Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved only if cooperation is integrated across different fields and sectors. The United Nations development system must be reformed and made truly fit for purpose. The United Nations system must completely rethink its operational approach. The silo mentality and internal competition for resources must become phenomena of the past.

Denmark firmly believes that we need a significantly strengthened focus on the role of young people. The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is essentially an agenda for future generations. Accordingly, the engagement of the world's young people in its implementation is indispensable. Young people possess enormous potential and must be involved in the work ahead.

We also need civil society, academia and the private sector to support policy implementation and provide innovative solutions and know-how. We need to engage in fruitful public-private partnerships to push implementation even further.

Governments can play an important role in further encouraging private business and investors to contribute to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. That is why the Prime Minister of Denmark last week announced a new Sustainable Development Goals investment fund. The goal is to raise capital from private investors and reach a capital base of up to $750 million. Investments will be made across the Sustainable Development Goals — to improve energy, climate mitigation, industry, infrastructure, food production

and health care in order to generate sustainable growth, jobs and tax revenue in developing countries.

In addition, we need global free trade as an essential element in fostering long-term development and economic growth. Denmark is actively advocating for creating better market access for developing countries and improving business conditions, including at the World Trade Organization. In short, if goods pass borders, it is less likely that soldiers will.

The effectiveness of the United Nations system, and indeed our ability to turn the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals into reality, begins and ends with the willingness of Member States to work together. Addressing global challenges through dialogue is the raison d'être of the United Nations, and it resonates with Danish political tradition. That is why, from the beginning, we have been deeply engaged in building up the Organization. This is also true in very concrete terms, as the Trusteeship Council Chamber, located next to this General Assembly Hall, was designed by the Danish architect Finn Juhl, whose design was precisely intended to foster dialogue among delegates, thereby promoting the democratic mission of the United Nations. In all modesty, we think he succeeded quite well.

More than 50 years of partnerships in international development with an approach based on dialogue has taught us the value of partnership in ensuring progress. As just one example, Denmark has for decades been a strong supporter of national human rights institutions and commissions, ombudsmen and other independent human rights bodies, from the Middle East to Africa and Eurasia.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women, key requirements for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, are a cornerstone of our foreign policy. Studies show that, when a girl receives just one additional year of education, she can increase her earnings by up to 20 per cent. That is important, not only for her but also for her family, her community and her country.

Denmark was extremely proud to host the Women Deliver 2016 Global Conference in Copenhagen, earlier this year. The Conference was a testimony to the importance Denmark places on ensuring women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. A plethora of programmes, initiatives and strategies were showcased at the Conference, providing inspiration for women and men all over the world.

At home and abroad, Denmark promotes the human rights and values of indigenous peoples. We stand for their right to control and influence their own development paths and determine matters regarding their own economic, social, political and cultural situation.

Denmark is one of the strongest voices in the global fight against torture. For decades we have ensured the successful adoption of General Assembly resolutions that further the work on the elimination of torture, as laid out in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Implementation, however, is key. That is why we — together with Chile, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco — have launched the Convention against Torture initiative. Our goal is to work towards universal ratification and better implementation of the Convention by 2024.

As the people's Organization, the United Nations needs to do better to foster trust, transparency and efficiency. I am proud that during Mr. Lykketoft's presidency of the General Assembly important steps were taken to increase transparency in the work of the Office of the President as well in the selection process for the next Secretary-General. If the United Nations is to remain a relevant and legitimate organization for peace, development and human rights, we must continue on the path of increased openness and transparency. That is in the shared interest of all Member States.

In conclusion, allow me, on behalf of the Government of Denmark, to take this opportunity to also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Denmark salutes the progressive leadership and determination that the Secretary-General has displayed through a difficult and very challenging period in the history of the United Nations. He has tirelessly led the way to finding viable solutions to global challenges, in particular climate change, which has been a journey that led us from Bali to Copenhagen and, finally, to Paris, and which resulted, last December, in an ambitious global agreement to fight climate change. Denmark reiterates its appreciation for the progressive leadership and determination of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

It is of the utmost importance that the new Secretary-General show the same determination as his predecessor

in forcefully addressing the challenges posed to the millions of displaced persons, refugees and migrants across the world, while ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and undertaking the necessary crucial reforms of the United Nations. As we strive to reform the Organization, Denmark will stand by the side of the next Secretary-General and continue to support and take active and constructive part in the critical work of the United Nations going forward.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Kokou Kpayedo, Chair of the Delegation of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Kpayedo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver to the General Assembly a message from the His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Togolese Republic.

> "It is with a feeling of shared joy that we take part in the seventy-first session of the General Assembly dedicated to the theme "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". First of all, I would like to express my congratulations to Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.
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> "I also wish to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has worked tirelessly to strengthen the work of our Organization during the past decade. Mr. Ban Ki-moon was able to successfully guide the United Nations in the process towards the design and adoption of a new framework that will lead the Organization and the people of the planet for the next 15 years. I am speaking of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
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> "A year ago, we adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the aim of transforming the world. Since then, we have together begun the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda to build a more prosperous, inclusive and secure world. I am therefore happy to see the relevance of the central theme submitted to Member States, because the realization of the SDGs definitely requires a new impetus of our countries individually and collectively and a resolute commitment by the entire international community.
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> "At the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July, Togo, a pilot country for the Sustainable Development Goals, offered to participate in an exercise on the advancement of the integration of the SDGs into the strategies and national development programmes. On that occasion, we were able to show progress in the implementation of our SDG road map, and we were also able to share the significant progress we have made in the implementation of key actions to leave no one behind.
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> "Specifically, our country has made significant progress in economic growth, the reduction of poverty and the promotion of peaceful democracy, and remains determined to do everything we can to ensure genuine, inclusive and sustainable growth. Because of that determination, we launched, with national financing and the assistance of United Nations Development Programme, the implementation of an emergency community development programme to help significantly improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations in our society.
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> "Moreover, the encouragement we received in the progress in the area of human development, such as recognition by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of the Togolese programme on the fighting hunger and malnutrition, inspires our enthusiasm to intensify investment in development favouring the most vulnerable sectors. We also welcome the fact that the SDGs confirm the validity of strategic initiatives that we have been implementing in recent years, at the level of infrastructure and economic diversification and in the improvement of the business climate and the promotion of young people's and women's entrepreneurship. Actions are under way to begin the adoption process by the end of the year of the implementation of our national sustainable development plan, which seamlessly integrates the SDGs and will follow on our accelerated growth strategy and the promotion of employment for the 2013-2017 period.
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> "Recognizing that accountability for the results and mutual learning processes among countries are determinants for speeding up our progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, Togo will participate in the voluntary review to take place at the next high-level political segment on the implementation of the SDGs. We therefore take this opportunity

before the Assembly to thank all entities of the United Nations system that have helped us in this exercise.

"It is our conviction that the SDGs should make it possible to transform the world by giving priority to the most vulnerable groups — women, young people and children, populations threatened by conflicts and disasters, migrants and refugees. The need to look out for the fortunes of our peoples who had been left behind will assume a whole new dimension as we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Making development for the most vulnerable a priority is becoming increasingly crucial in the current context, which is marked by multiple and pressing challenges of persistent poverty and unemployment and threats to human security linked to climate change, disease, conflict and terrorism.

"On actions for the protection of the environment, Togo is facing major climate challenges, such as coastal erosion, flooding, desertification and unpredictable rainy seasons. I take this opportunity at the Assembly to renew our firm commitment to the Paris Agreement. My country signed the Agreement and will do everything it can to aid in concluding the ratification process by the end of 2016. We are also doing everything possible to implement it. We welcome the ratification of the Agreement, which is so important for the future and survival of our planet.

"The era we live in is also marked by a resurgence of new health challenges that compromise the progress we have realized in human and economic terms. Since we are aware of that reality, in my position as a coordinator of the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak Response Plan in West Africa, I would like to thank all partners and organizations that made it possible for us to contain and even eliminate this epidemic.

"Continuing in the area of health, I would like to pay tribute to all the organizations and Member States that contributed to reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Despite the progress, we must not lower our guard because new health threats are on the horizon — diseases that in the past were under control but might resurge. We need to reinforce our health systems and policies in order to eradicate diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, better fight maternal and infant mortality and protect our world against antimicrobial resistance.

"No development programme will be able to succeed and be sustainable if the national context in which it is to be implemented is not imbued with peace and cohesion. That is why my Government has deployed so many efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, which are considered to be the root causes of insecurity and terrorism. Furthermore, we are working towards strengthening democracy and the rule of law by implementing political and institutional reforms that are consistent with the realities in our countries. In that regard, the recently created the Togolese High Commission for Reconciliation and Strengthening National Unity organized a workshop in July to reflect on and exchange views among all components of the Togolese nation with regard to establishing the bases for reforms that have not yet taken effect.

"We are also working to step up democracy at the local level in order to provide a better chance for the success of our development strategy to reduce regional disparity. In order to do that, an accelerated plan of action and decentralization is also being implemented and should lead in the near future to local elections.

"In the area of the protection and promotion of human rights, we are determined to strengthen our achievements in order to better guarantee fundamental freedoms. We also plan to make better use of our term in the Human Rights Council for the 2016-2018 period. In that regard, my country, which has undertaken a number of reforms in accordance with the recommendations resulting from the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, is preparing for the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, which will take place from 31 October to 11 November.

"The noble objectives that our countries have set for themselves, in particular in the areas of sustainable development and the protection of the climate for future generations, cannot be achieved unless peace and security are guaranteed throughout the world. In that regard, despite the efforts that have been made under the auspices of our Organization and regional institutions, peace and security continue to be threatened or put at risk in certain regions. In Africa, Togo very much

hopes that the efforts made by the United Nations and regional African organizations will help to bring peace to South Sudan and Libya, to cite but two countries. In that regard, Togo welcomes the fruitful discussions that took place in the African Union Peace and Security Council several days ago regarding South Sudan's future, and calls upon the parties involved to spare no effort in strengthening the country's foundations. Elsewhere in the world, my country calls upon all parties involved in the Syrian conflict to work in good faith to ensure that the Syrian people, crippled by a long conflict that has destabilized the whole region, can once again find peace, security and stability.

"As we all know, the Syrian and the Libyan crises in particular are fuelling the scourge of terrorism, from which no region in the world is currently spared. I would like to once again remember the countless victims of terrorism and to express Togo's solidarity with the countries and populations that have recently fallen victim to the scourge. An effective counter-terrorism strategy requires States to continue working together by further strengthening the cooperation among their relevant technical units. The wealthiest countries must also agree to support more than they do already States like Togo that do not have the necessary resources to effectively fight terrorism.

"In the light of the increasing risks and threats in our world today, our top priority must be to equip ourselves with the means to effectively and swiftly address the varying challenges that are affecting the well-being of our populations and limiting our economic development. Security threats are a huge risk for our agenda of transforming the world and require us to intensify our efforts to promote international peace and security. To meet that requirement, my country will host the African Union Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa from 10 to 15 October. The Summit's aim is to agree on a joint declaration that can better prevent and address maritime insecurity and promote sustainable and inclusive development of the blue economy in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. I wish to once again take this opportunity to extend an invitation to Member States to take part in the high-level Summit, which will involve all stakeholders from my country.

"Seventy years after its creation, the United Nations has greatly contributed to progress in the world by promoting peace, sustainable development and human rights. It has been able to bring about such change by reforming some of its own organs in order to take into account the world's shifting circumstances, which Togo welcomes. However, our Organization, which continues to work towards the rooting of democracy in its Member States, has found it difficult to reform the Security Council. Its current composition does not reflect real development in the world. My country believes that it is high time for Member States, and particularly for the five permanent members of the Council, to resolve to undertake a reform of the organ, which is the only way to avoid the frequent deadlock that prevents the Council from taking action and rapidly solving crises and conflicts. At a time when the international community is resolutely committed to pursuing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the benefit of all, any further delay in the process of reforming the Security Council can only be harmful to the fulfilment of the SDGs.

"Addressing all of those challenges calls for effective and inclusive mobilization with the means to bring about the necessary changes for a better world. More specifically, a transformation of the African economy is key to eliminating poverty and hunger, providing young people with a future and curbing economic migrants. Such transformation is also the best protection against terrorism and the world's growing insecurity and is essential in giving fresh impetus to growth and in reducing pressure on the environment. Transforming the African economy will help to solve the world's challenges, but we must stay in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and be mobilized for subsequent investments through various mechanisms, in accordance with Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

"Our collective ambition is the well-being of everyone, which means that no one should be left behind. In that regard, efforts need to be undertaken that favour Africa, which is home to the greatest number of poor countries, in order to ensure its inclusion in the world economy. Moreover, the African continent remains an important lever for transforming the world in the SDG era, as it offers huge potential for a profound transformation of

our world, with a youth population full of vitality, dynamic demographic growth, a wealth of natural resources, ingenuity and resilient men and women. In order to benefit from Africa's potential, we must remove the obstacles that impede its social and economic development as soon as possible, in order to reap the positive benefits at a global level, including in the areas of climate, peace, security, health and the right to development.

"In the hope of an innovative United Nations partnership that can transform the world, starting with Africa, I welcome the commitment shown by the international community in its adoption of the SDGs. I remain convinced that the current session of the General Assembly will allow us to capitalize on the commitment to strengthen our collective working capacity between now and 2030, so as to bring about a world that is more secure, prosperous and equal, and which demonstrates solidarity and respects human rights, in response to the deep-seated aspirations of our peoples."

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate. Before proceeding to statements by Member States in the exercise of the right of reply, we shall now hear two closing statements on the occasion of the conclusion of our debate.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General, to make closing remarks on behalf of the Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to make a few informal remarks at the end of the general debate on behalf of the Secretary-General, who is currently in Bogotá celebrating the peace agreement in Colombia.

I wish to commend Member States for the high quality of their statements during the general debate, the high level of attendance and the seriousness with which they have described the current situation in the world, from their different perspectives. I have not spent as much time as I would have liked to in the Hall, but I have enjoyed every minute of it when I was able to be here, and we have naturally read all the statements made. I commend members for the work they have done in preparing for this year's general debate.

This is the time of year when, here at the United Nations, we take the world's temperature, which is currently running quite high. But I also see many reasons for hope, as Member States have been very principled in their remarks, sticking to the ideals of the Organization and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting the work in all pillars of the United Nations, whether it be peace and security, development or human rights. The general debate has been a great tribute to internationalism and multilateralism in a day and age when those concepts are being tested.

We therefore need to understand that, in order to achieve what we want, our work in the Organization must be ongoing and tireless. If we can show enough skill and diligence to create satisfactory international solutions to today's problems, we will increasingly find that these international solutions and formulas are also in the national interest of Member States. We must therefore remove the often artificial line between the concepts of international and national. I know that the President will mention some of the highlights of the debate in his summary, but let me just mention very briefly how much the Secretary-General and I have deeply appreciated the Assembly's strong emphasis.

First of all, on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Assembly's great achievement accomplished in September last year, or rather in the three and a half years leading up to their adoption. I think it is a historic achievement. Member States have laid the foundation for a new direction in development. When one adds up the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, it is a remarkable chance for there to be a new development path for Member States and other actors worldwide to follow.

In addition, I know that the Secretary-General particularly appreciated the Assembly's strong emphasis on climate change issues. As is well known, his role in on those issues has been active and instrumental, but it would never have happened unless Member States had come to the conclusion that we must shift course in the interest of future generations, the planet and our life on it. There might be a plan B in life, but there certainly is no planet B.

I also think that the high-level meeting on refugees and migration coloured this year's general debate. Solidarity with refugees and the problems for countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination came to the fore, and we mobilized around

the xenophobia that sometimes is visible in today's world.

We have to make sure that we see the advantages of people moving across borders, although we know that sometimes such movements signal tremendous challenges. However, the New York Declaration, of 19 September 2016, together with the leaders' summit on refugees led by President Obama, has given a new structure to the work on refugees and migration that will be very useful. Above all, I hope that we will make sure that the Organization sends a signal that everybody is of equal value and that we need to work in such a way as to prevent xenophobic tendencies, which are so strong in today's world, from prevailing.

With respect to conflicts, I could go on forever, but I will mention only Syria — the horror of Syria, the nightmare of Syria — and both the need to move towards stopping the horrific fighting — the many strong statements made in that regard impressed us — and the need for us to then do the humanitarian work that the United Nations wants to do once the fighting is reduced in intensity. That would, in turn, lead to the possibility of starting a political process, the prospects for which look pretty sombre today. But we cannot abandon this perspective. The suffering has gone on far too long. The dangers for the region and the world are enormous. We must mobilize to stop this war.

Next, I would also like to commend the new efforts by both the General Assembly and the Security Council to accept the notion and concept of sustaining peace, that peace is something that we need to think about, in terms of both prevention — reducing violence — and post-conflict work. In that regard, I think that in our hands lies great potential, together with the Sustainable Development Goals, to cross the border lines between peace, security, development and human rights. It is a great challenge for the United Nations, and I hope that we all accept and adopt it.

The last point is simply to express, on behalf of the Secretary-General, his gratitude to the members of the General Assembly for the very generous and warm comments about his 10-year term. He has been hard at work for all these 10 years. Although I have done only half that number, I understand the tremendous pressure he has been under. But the comments made on his role in different areas, not least in climate change, have warmed his heart. I am certain of that. I will convey members' comments on his accomplishments to him. Above all, I want to convey to him the spirit in which all members have contributed to a very good general debate. This is also my own last general debate. Once again, I thank the President for giving me this opportunity to present remarks in this informal way at the end of the debate.

The Acting President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his statement.

It is now my honour to deliver this closing statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, who, as we speak, is participating in the signing of the Colombian peace deal in Colombia today.

> "The general debate of the General Assembly provides us with a portrait of the current state of our world, painted for us by the Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers of the States Members of the United Nations. Over the past six days, we have heard from members of the Assembly about their priorities and concerns as well as their hopes for peace, human rights and sustainable development. Leaders recalled and reaffirmed the spirit and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and confirmed their faith in the central role of the United Nations in international cooperation. They also addressed many of today's critical global issues.
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> "In line with the theme of the seventy-first session, many leaders expressed their commitment to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We began with a moving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) moment, which reminded us of how transformative the SDGs will be and how urgently action is now required to implement them. I am greatly encouraged by the fact that so many Member States have already embedded the SDGs into their plans and policies. The task at hand is implementation of the SDGs, and I was encouraged by the many side events last week that emphasized the need for action.
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> "Wednesday's parallel meeting on antimicrobial resistance stressed the urgent need for a global response to address that critical issue, the impact of which threatens millions of lives and progress across the SDGs.
>
> "I reiterate my call to Member States to see the SDGs included in the education curriculums

of every country around the world. It is the young people of the world who must know the SDGs in all their universal and integrated dimensions, since they will be the inheritors of the 2030 Agenda.

"Action on climate change is of course essential. I congratulate the Secretary-General on the success of his Paris Agreement ratification ceremony last week. I note that we now need ratifications from parties to the Agreement covering only a further 7.5 per cent of global greenhouse-gas emissions to see the Agreement enter into force. I am confident we will see this happen prior to the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Morocco. I urge all members not just to ratify the agreement promptly, but to scale up the level of ambition in reducing emissions in order to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and to mobilize the climate finance required to support vulnerable countries like the small island developing States and others.

"Looking ahead, I am glad that many leaders identified the forthcoming third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, in Ecuador next month, and the SDG 14 conference on oceans, to take place in June 2017, as additional major opportunities to drive SDG implementation.

"The plight of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants across our world was a focus of last week's deliberations. The adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) at last Monday's high-level summit was an important step forward. The summit launched a process that I will take forward during this session with a view to adopting two global compacts on migrants and on refugees in 2018.

"The current global humanitarian and refugee crisis has its roots in a number of ongoing conflicts in our world and has been exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. I joined the Secretary-General and Member States in condemning the unacceptable attacks on a United Nations aid convoy in Aleppo and in calling for a renewed effort on the part of global and regional powers to find a peaceful political solution.

"Many Member States called for a resumption of the Middle East peace process in order to find a lasting solution. They also stressed the need to solve other conflicts and to address the spread of violent extremism and terrorism.

"In relation to United Nations capacities in maintaining international peace and security, many recalled the historic endorsement by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the concept of sustaining peace, while several Member States made reference to the importance of women's participation in peace processes and of implementing commitments following the 2015 review of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

"Numerous speakers stressed the pressing need for reform of the Security Council, while many others highlighted the critical importance of advancing disarmament. Those calls will no doubt be echoed in today's high-level plenary meeting at United Nations Headquarters to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

"In the area of human rights, Member States renewed their call for the promotion and protection of all human rights and for dedicated efforts towards the empowerment of women and girls. Member States emphasized the interrelationship between human rights, peace and sustainable development. Such linkages were also highlighted in the context of last Thursday's high-level meeting commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Some members also recalled the challenges related to intolerance and xenophobia and the continuing need to tackle all forms of discrimination.

"Last week we witnessed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's final address in a general debate. His statement was a testimony both to the work he has done these past nine years and to the scale of the challenges his successor will face. The selection and appointment of that successor were addressed by almost every Member State. This is a matter that I will manage with great care over the coming months, in line with the principles of transparency and accountability and with a view to ensuring a smooth transition.

"This is but a synopsis of the many issues raised these past six days. Member States' engagement, and that of the many stakeholders that have joined us this week, demonstrates once again the unique nature of the general debate. It is the embodiment of the equality of nations and provides Member States with an opportunity to advance our collective pursuit of solutions to global challenges through dialogue and cooperation.

"At the same time, I am concerned that the standard of decorum during the general debate appears to be slipping, with high levels of noise in the Hall and its surrounds; with the allocated speaking time often ignored; with low attendance by delegations as the debate progresses; and with the proliferation of mandated and other events happening simultaneously with the general debate. I will therefore encourage the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly to consider that matter during the seventy-first session.

"To conclude, let me express my sincere appreciation to all of the staff of the United Nations — the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the interpreters, security officers, protocol, maintenance staff and others — for their professionalism throughout. Allow me to thank Member States for their kind words of personal congratulations and support. I look forward to representing each and every one to the best of my ability during the seventy-first session."

Several delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind representatives that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Horoi (Solomon Islands): Solomon Islands would like to exercise its right of reply to the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on 24 September, regarding the ongoing human rights violations of the Melanesian people in West Papua (see A/71/PV.21).

Solomon Islands notes Indonesia's right of reply regarding the efforts made by the Indonesian Government to establish human rights monitoring mechanisms and other avenues to ensure that human rights violations in West Papua are addressed. We note that Indonesia ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1998, but to date it has not been able to harmonize the law to include the definition of torture, let alone to criminalize and punish torture. Moreover, Indonesia has not submitted its periodic report to the Committee against Torture since 2008.

The Solomon Islands delegation receives reports from respective sources of fellow States Members of the United Nations and moral leaders from civil society, illustrating a lack of protection of the human rights of the Melanesian people of West Papua. In that regard, Solomon Islands therefore invites Indonesia to substantiate its allegations that the Solomon Islands, together with the five other Pacific Island delegations, have used false and fabricated information by allowing United Nations Special Rapporteurs mandated by the Human Rights Council to visit West Papua and Papua.

Our concern has to do with the increasing loss of lives at the hands of Indonesia authorities. We may argue and concede that mistakes are made and that lives are lost as a consequence, but how can we, as members of this body — the defender of human rights and the body of reference in ethical and moral values — turn a blind eye to the deaths of more than 500,000 West Papuans over the course of the past 50 years?

As an island country in the region that Indonesia claims to be a part of, Solomon Islands cannot stand behind the argument of sovereignty and integrity of any country and watch such atrocities take place. It is our moral and ethical duty, as members of this gathering, to bring this unfortunate reality to the fore and to find a way together to stop the loss of lives and protect the rights of all human beings, be they Melanesians, West Papuans or any other.

Furthermore, we come together to agree on certain rights and hold each other accountable to those rights. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that "[e]veryone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". Indonesia has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is also a binding legal instrument. Article 9 of the Covenant reinforces the right to liberty and security of person. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights entails a responsibility to protect all populations from mass atrocities, crimes and human rights violations.

In essence, we uphold the argument of sovereignty and national integrity. We, as States Members of the United Nations, should also hold other Member States accountable under article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Indonesia has further clarified the many development challenges faced by the Solomon Islands. Such is the case with the five other Pacific Island States that were mentioned by the representative of Indonesia in his right of reply. Earlier in this meeting, the representative of Palau indicated that our challenges are difficult ones and we know full well that we alone cannot and will not be able to resolve them. That is why we highlight those challenges before this body.

In a similar vein, we highlight the human rights violations in West Papua because we realize that neither we nor Indonesia can resolve that matter alone. We are of the position that the matter needs to be brought to the attention of a United Nations body. It needs to be done urgently as lives are being lost, in all impunity. All lives matter. West Papuan lives matter. Solomon Islands wishes to reiterate its willingness to engage constructively with Indonesia on the matter of West Papua. In fact, our Pacific regional and subregional bodies have indicated their willingness to discuss these matters with Indonesia, as we are all concerned about the increasing loss of life in West Papua.

Over the past 20 years, our Pacific island countries have expressed the need for dialogue with Indonesia over human rights violations. Over the past 18 months, the regional and subregional organizations of the Pacific island countries have made three attempts to engage constructively with Indonesia. Indonesia's lack of will to engage will not dampen the commitment of Solomon Islands, together with six other Pacific Island countries, to pursue dialogue and constructive engagement, which are the only means of resolving this matter. We understand that through constructive engagement and dialogue we can realize the Articles of the Charter of the United Nations and the subsequent international human rights instruments that Indonesia has ratified.

In closing, the Solomon Islands welcomes the opportunity to highlight this case before the Assembly so that, together as a family of nations, we can — and we must — address the human rights violations and loss of lives in West Papua. It impinges on us, as States Members of the United Nations, to cast aside all barriers so that further lives are not lost in West Papua. We are here to enable the divine purpose of the universe to unfold, for life is sacred.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): The Pakistan delegation is obliged to respond to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of India earlier today.

Her statement is a litany of falsehoods about my country and a travesty of facts and history that reflects only the deceit and hostility of her Government towards Pakistan. We reject all the baseless allegations made in that statement. These allegations are designed principally to deflect global attention away from the brutalities being perpetrated by India's occupation force of over half a million troops against innocent and unarmed Kashmiri children, women and men in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Their call for freedom has been met with characteristic Indian brutality.

During the past two and a half months, over 100 innocent Kashmiris — including infants, children, women and men — have been killed, hundreds blinded and thousands injured by Indian bullets and pellets. This is the worst form of State terrorism — a war crime that India has continued to perpetrate in the situation of foreign occupation in Jammu and Kashmir for the past many decades. Pakistan demands a full and impartial investigation of these Indian atrocities and massive human rights violations in Kashmir. We ask that India accept the investigation proposed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and allow it unfettered access for this purpose.

Jammu and Kashmir never was and never can be an integral part of India. It is disputed territory, the final status of which has yet to be determined in accordance with several resolutions of the Security Council. The right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination has been recognized and promised to them by the Security Council, India and Pakistan. For 70 years India, through force and fraud, has prevented the Kashmiris from exercising this right and from holding the United Nations-supervised plebiscite set to enable the Kashmiris to determine their political destiny. The struggle of the Kashmiri people for self-determination is a legitimate one, and they have the right to receive the moral and political support of the international community.

The attack on the Indian army base in Uri, particularly its timing, has all the hallmarks of an

operation designed to divert attention from India's atrocities in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The international community is well aware that several similar incidents have been staged in the past to serve India's tactical and propaganda objectives. India is utilizing the Uri incident to blame Pakistan for the current Kashmiri uprising and to divert attention from its brutal occupation. India's Government is delusional if it believes that it can isolate any country. It is India itself which, because of its war crimes and warmongering in Kashmir and elsewhere, is likely to be isolated within the international community.

It is India that has long been a sponsor and practitioner of State terrorism. Over the course of the past half-century, India has sponsored and perpetrated terrorism and aggression against all its neighbours, creating terrorist groups, destabilizing and blockading neighbours to do its strategic bidding, and sponsoring subversion, sabotage and terrorism in various parts of my country. The recently captured Indian spy, intelligence officer Kulbhushan Yadav, has confessed to India's support of such terrorist and subversive activities, particularly in the province of Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Indeed, it was Kulbhushan who was financing, arming and supporting individuals and entities listed under the United Nations sanctions regime. India's policy of interference in Pakistan, especially its attempt to destabilize Balochistan, is now a matter of record. This is a blatant violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Instead of aiming to destabilize Pakistan, the Indian Government would do well to address India's own vast internal problems and the dozen or so insurgencies occurring in its own country. For the Indian Foreign Minister to claim that her country has imposed no preconditions for talks with Pakistan is yet another falsehood. It was India that suspended talks with Pakistan more than a year ago. It is India that has refused to resume them despite repeated offers from Pakistan and advice from the international community. The latest offer for talks was made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan from the rostrum of the General Assembly.

Let us be clear that talks are no favour to Pakistan. They are in the interests of both Pakistan and India, and the people of both countries. Let me reiterate that Pakistan is ready and willing for serious and result-oriented talks with India, with regard in particular to resolve the outstanding dispute of Jammu and Kashmir, which is imperative for durable peace in our region.

Ms. Gambhir (India): In yet another attempt to divert our attention from her country's continued sponsorship of terorrism, today we have heard the Permanent Representative of Pakistan make a fanciful and misleading presentation on the situation in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. At the same time, we did not see any attempt by her to answer questions that have been posed repeatedly by the international community to Pakistan.

Can the representative of Pakistan clarify how it is that terror sanctuaries and safe havens in her country continue to flourish despite the Pakistan Army's much-vaunted counter-terrorism operations and the billions of dollars of international counter-terrorism aid it receives? Can the representative of Pakistan confirm that her country does not use terrorist proxies and export terrorism as a matter of State policy? Can the representative of Pakistan deny that Pakistan, in 2004, assured that it would not allow any territories under its control to be used for terror attacks against India? Can the representative of Pakistan deny that Pakistan has failed to honour the aforementioned assurance, which was given at the highest level?

We have heard today the views of a dysfunctional State that inflicts atrocity after atrocity upon its own people while preaching the values of tolerance, democracy and human rights. We reject these sermons entirely. On the other hand, will the representative of Pakistan deny that the armed forces of her country committed one of the most extensive and heinous genocides in human history in 1971? Will the representative of Pakistan deny that her country's armed forces have repeatedly used air strikes and artillery against its own people? Will the representative of Pakistan explain why Pakistani civil society is being silenced by the plethora of heavily armed militias that go by such names such as "*Jaish*", meaning "army"; "*Lashkar*", meaning "army; "*Sipah*", meaning "soldiers"; and "*Harkat*", meaning "armed movement"?

Finally, it appears that the Representative of Pakistan did not hear clearly what our Minister of External Affairs stated during her address earlier today: "The State of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so". We hope that the message is loud and clear.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to exercise our right of reply to the statement delivered by the Foreign Minister of Belize in reference to the territorial, maritime and island dispute with my country and recent occurrences in the context of a 150-year-old conflict. We listened carefully but in disbelief to the Foreign Minister's remarks, which contained untrue statements.

First, we reiterate our commitment to peace and to a permanent and definitive resolution before the International Court of Justice of a territorial dispute that both countries inherited. As was stated in this forum by the President of the Republic of Guatemala, Mr. Jimmy Morales (see A/71/PV.15), we hope to enjoy a privileged relationship with Belize and an ongoing dialogue with a view to resolving our shared problems.

Guatemala is a founding Member of the Organization, and throughout its membership has never resorted to the use or threat of use of force, just as we have never committed any act against the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. To the contrary, we have sought a peaceful resolution, in accordance with the principles of justice and international law, to the dispute that we have enduredfor more than a century and half. For more than 120 years, Guatemala has done the impossible to reach a peaceful and mutually beneficial resolution — through direct negotiations, mediation and good offices, among other measures — to the issue of its usurped territory. However, the colonizing Power took advantage of our good faith by unilaterally granting independence to Belize in 1981, which once again was contrary to agreements made.

Notwithstanding the abuse and plundering Guatemala has suffered, we recognized the right to self-determination of the people of Belize and their independence, but we maintained our legitimate claim to our historic rights over part of their territory. Guatemala has always sought through peaceful means a just, honourable and lasting peace in the name of the rights that were taken from us by invasion, force and deceit. We recognize the existence of the State of Belize, but we have not renounced our rights, just as we have not resorted to violent acts against authorities or citizens of our brother country.

Today we are witnessing another kind of violence — deplorable behaviour that contravenes the bonds of friendship that should govern relations among nations, as prescribed by Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. This is an obligation that should be fulfilled in good faith in order to reach a peaceful resolution to our territorial, maritime and island dispute, as also provided for in Article 2 of the Charter.

Despite the purposes and principles of the Charter, over the past decade the lives of defenceless Guatemalan farmers have been taken by Belizean arms; their only mistake was to come upon areas under Belizean administration. These are people who never posed a threat to the security of Belize. Such grave acts of irrationality and provocation are unjustifiable and constitute hostile acts that violate the most basic rules of coexistence, and a moral delinquency that jeopardizes intentional peace and security, causing outrage among a people who long for peace and call for justice and decent treatment.

These violent deaths — including the latest, a 14-year-old boy who died at the hands of irregular armed forces accompanying the so-called Belize Defence Force— have all gone unpunished. These are barbaric acts that are fundamentally hostile and contradict both the spirit of the Charter and the inevitable need to promote harmonious and mutually beneficial relations. Moreover, they demonstrate irrational behaviour that is not legally justifiable.

The expert report to which the Foreign Minister of Belize referred does not exonerate Belize, but indicates that the shots leading to the death of the boy, Julio René Alvarado, were from .22 and .12 calibre weapons. Members of the Belizean non-governmental organization Friends for Conservation and Development, which was in a joint patrol under the command of the so-called Belize Defence Force, were carrying those same types of weapons. Although Guatemala did not object to the credentials of the experts, it rejects the content of the report due to the inconsistencies presented and the fact that there is no documentation of scientific support and its only backing is the statements of people who were directly involved in the tragic events of the fateful night of 20 April. This is precisely why such statements have no merit whatsoever.

It is irresponsible to claim that elements of the Guatemalan Armed Forces helped certain citizens to illegally enter Belize at the place where the incident occurred so as to destroy evidence that would have been helpful to the investigation. Furthermore, it shows that Belize did not guard the crime scene, much

less the chain of custody of the evidence. Belize was responsible for such tasks, given that the incidents took place in territory administered by that country, thereby naturally compromising the investigation and its results. Whether or not the boy had been detained, the excessive use of force by the joint patrol of Belize was no more justified than the six bullet wounds in the boy's back or the two lethal shots in the back of his neck. Similarly, none of the deaths of 10 Guatemalan farmers in the Adjacency Zone administered by Belize was in any way justifiable.

Regarding the policeman Daniel Conorquie, who died in 2014 in the archaeological site known as Caracol, and the injuries suffered by Staff Sergeant Richard Lambey in 2016, these acts were committed by people that entered into Belize from Guatemala. As affirmed by Foreign Minister Elrington, that does not mean or prove that the people who perpetrated such acts are citizens of my country; this is information that still has to be investigated.

Guatemala has been patient and conciliatory. For more than 150 years, we have had to tolerate the threat, seizure and treachery of the imperialist Power, to which must be added the present violence and false accusation by those who are playing the victim when really they are the aggressors. The unauthorized presence of people does not and never will justify the disproportionate and lethal use of weapons, for any reason whatsoever.

We regret having to resort to this forum for the first time to denounce insidious behaviour that obscures the reality of the situation. We will continue to seek in good faith a solution to our rights in a civilized manner, guided by the pressing need to find practical solutions to our shared problems. We will be unrelenting in our efforts to find a fair solution to this historic dispute, just as we refuse to abandon our citizens. Rather, we will continue our pursuit of an understanding with a view to promoting the common good and the privilege of living in peace and harmony.

In that regard, Guatemala will shortly adhere to the Protocol to the Special Agreement that governs the simultaneous negotiations, thereby reaffirming our resolve to submit our territorial, maritime and island dispute to the International Court of Justice, the supreme body that can and must resolve this age-old problem so as to avoid further violent acts that will only harm both nations.

Mr. Yazdani (Iran): I am obliged to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply.

The Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, in his address to the General Assembly on Saturday (see A/71/PV.21), reported a number of baseless and absurd fabrications against my Government. Those same targeted accusations have also been levelled by the same and other United Arab Emirates officials on other occasions, but no effort has ever been made to substantiate them or to provide any proof to support them. They are flatly wrong in their thinking that repetition may make a claim credible. Conversely, repetition makes baseless claims tedious and repulsive.

It is absurd and hypocritical for the official of a country whose jet fighters are bombing innocent civilians in Yemen to accuse Iran of interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries. It is also farcical to witness a regime that, along with certain other accomplices, has been exporting a host of extremist takfiri ideologies for decades, as well as funding and arming terrorists in Iraq, Syria and many other places, take the floor just to accuse Iran of attempting to destabilize the region.

The Emirates official once again assaulted Iran's territorial integrity by repeating a baseless claim to Iran's three islands in the Persian Gulf. We have always rejected that falsehood and reiterated that those islands have been and continue to be part of Iranian territory. No claim, no matter how many times it is repeated, will be able in any way to dent or undermine our resolve to refute such claims.

Moreover, taken together with the American and Israeli representatives' statements in the Assembly, we may better understand the remark in the Israeli statement concerning increasing understanding between the Israeli regime and certain regimes in the region. In that light, we can understand that the focus of the United Arab Emirates statement on Iran and Iran's three islands is not a pure coincidence. A review of those two statements clearly shows how the two respective regimes have come together and how the United Arab Emirates and a few of its partners in the Persian Gulf are now uniting with the Israelis — a coalition that could only be tantamount to betraying the Palestinian people.

The United Arab Emirates official also referred to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or, as he put it, the so-called nuclear agreement. We know

that the United Arab Emirates and some of its partners in the Persian Gulf region did everything in their power to impede the road to that deal, to no avail. We know that after the fruition of the JCPOA, they escalated their provocation against Iran to compensate for the détente that the deal brought about. It is unfortunate that our efforts to reduce tension in the region are not reciprocated by them and that they continue to incite more tension in the region.

Allow me to also refer briefly to the statement made today by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, who also repeated the false claim of Iran's so-called intervention in Bahrain's domestic affairs, which is an obvious lie. Suffice it to remind him of the report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, set up by the Bahraini Government. The Commission's report, known as the Bassiouni report, reads in part:

> "The evidence presented to the Commission in relation to the involvement of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the internal affairs of Bahrain does not establish a discernible link between specific incidents that occurred in Bahrain...and the Islamic Republic of Iran".

He also referred at length to the Mina disaster of September 2015 and levelled criticism against Iran, which we reject. With regard to that incident, while the precious lives of approximately 500 Iranian pilgrims perished in the disaster, we rightly expected the Saudis to adopt a responsible approach, which has never been the case up to now. We note with concern that no findings from the local investigations of the tragedy, if any, have yet to be released. Our legitimate request for a thorough, transparent and independent investigation into the causes of the tragedy, through a committee in which the representatives of the affected countries could participate, has so far fallen on deaf ears. We note that the flawed management of the hajj pilgrimage has caused numerous deadly accidents. Therefore, we believe that effective action should be taken to redress the situation.

A few speakers also used false and incorrect terms to denote the Persian Gulf. We remind them that the traditional term "Persian Gulf" has been the correct appellation for that body of water since 500 years before Christ and will remain so forever. It is a standardized geographic term, recognized by the international community, including the United Nations, and should not be tinkered with due to political projects or the daily wishes of this or that ruler.

Last but not least, we have always endeavoured towards the removal of tension in our region and developing friendly and good-neighbourly relations with our neighbours, including those in the Persian Gulf. We once more reiterate our interest in, and call for, dialogue with a view to dispelling misunderstandings and restoring friendly relations that our people have mostly enjoyed throughout history.

Ms. Rakhmatia (Indonesia): I am compelled to take the floor again in exercise of our right of reply, due to the response of the delegation of Solomon Islands.

The remarks delivered earlier by the representative of Solomon Islands show the use of allegations of human rights violations to support the separatist movement, and only reaffirm the persistent violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations by blatantly interfering in the affairs, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other nations. It also demonstrates that country's representatives' continuing ignorance of the facts on the ground and how they have fallen into the trap of believing trash information peddled by separatist groups.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): We have been forced to take the floor again to respond to the Indian delegation's continued desire to express falsehoods and fabrications. We reject all delusional and false claims and assertions by the representative of India. Irrespective of how many times one repeats a lie, it can never replace the truth. The Indian representative seems to have become a victim of her own lies and propaganda.

The facts of the matter have not changed. Jammu and Kashmir remains an internationally recognized disputed territory. It is a travesty of justice and morality to stand here in the General Assembly Hall and make claims that are against the principles of international law. Indian State-sponsored terrorism continues in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Indian occupation forces are decimating the fundamental human rights of the hapless Kashmiris and committing a crime against humanity. Indian involvement in sabotage and subversive activities in Pakistan is a well-documented fact. Pakistan's commitment to fighting terrorism is recognized internationally.

Lastly, I would reiterate that it seems India has not heard the voice of the innocent Kashmiri people. They

do not want to live under occupation. They have been saying that for 70 years, but India only tries to repress that unanimous voice. I hope India will wake up to the reality.

Ms. Gambhir (India): We have patiently listened to our colleague from Pakistan. He has chosen yet again to stay silent on the tough questions. That is what we have come to expect from Pakistan — deception, deceit and denial. The world still awaits their response.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I wish to announce that this is the last meeting of the General Assembly for Ms. Emma Pioche, Conference Officer in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. Ms. Pioche, seen by all and known to many, has worked at the United Nations for 36 years, a majority of which have been associated with the work of the General Assembly plenary. Her contribution to the smooth running of Assembly meetings has been truly significant, and I would like the Assembly to give her a round of applause in appreciation. We wish her all the best.

The meeting rose at 2.35 p.m.